WILLIAM DAVIS

Editor of *Punch*

A practical and amusing guide
for business travellers

HAVE EXPENSES, WILL TRAVEL

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William Davis is editor of *Punch* and of the British Airways in-flight magazine, *High Life.* In those capacities, and before that, as financial editor of the *Guardian*, the *Sunday Express* and the *Evening Standard*, he has travelled widely and frequently; he says he has enjoyed every minute and every mile — well, almost all of them — and it's to communicate that enjoyment, and to enable others to share it, that he has written this book.

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Have Expenses, Will Travel

A Handbook For Business Travellers

William Davis

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INTRODUCTION

IT's easy to take modern travel for granted. At one time it took as much as a week to journey from London to Brighton; today airlines can get around the world in 60 hours. In the early nineteenth century the traveller to Italy still had to cross the Alps on foot, or be carried in a chair by porters. Today he can leave London or Paris in the morning, conduct his business over a relaxed lunch in Rome or Milan, and be back for the evening meal with his family. Some people even commute across the Atlantic. If you had predicted all this two hundred years ago you would probably have been certified insane, or locked up for witchcraft.

Some people, of course, regret the change of pace. They talk nostalgically about charabancs, hansom cabs, sedan chairs, penny farthings, cycle-cars, and *trains-de-luxe* like the old Trans-Siberian Railway, which had a reading-room car with a grand piano, a bath car and a chapel car. You had more fun in those days, more time to stare, more chance to get to know both people and cities. *Providing*, of course, you were wealthy and had nothing better to do.

The charabancs have gone, and the Trans-Siberian Railway is a pale shadow of its old elegant self, but I would rather have modern transport every time. Nostalgia has never held much appeal for me (I don't miss charabancs any more than I do remittance men, singing cowboys, plus fours or impersonations of James Cagney) and I suspect that travel in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries wasn't half as pleasant as the current generation of enthusiasts makes out. It certainly wasn't in Elizabethan England; roads then, according to a government paper published in 1555, were 'very noisome and tedious to travel in, and dangerous to all passengers and carriages'. Fifty years later the complaint was much the same and the lack of

good roads was 'the daily continual great grief and heart-breaking of man and beast; with charges, hindrances, wearing and tiring of them, and sometimes to the great and imminent danger of their lives.' There were no maps or signposts, and even royalty got lost. In 1592, Frederick Duke of Wurtenberg recorded a journey from Oxford to Cambridge. 'We passed,' he says, 'through a villainous, boggy and wild country and several times missed our way because the countryside thereabouts is very little inhabited and is nearly a waste, and there is one spot in particular where the mud is so deep that it would scarcely be possible to pass a coach in winter or in rainy weather.'

Modern trains are more reliable and faster. Planes have opened up the world to people who have neither the money nor the time for leisurely Grand Tours. And there is, as yet, no law which says one cannot take weeks or months to reach one's destination. Many people enjoy travelling by sea — of which more later. Some adore trains. I happen to be glad that I was born in what newspapers have dubbed the 'jet age'. If that makes me part of the 'jet set' I don't particularly mind.

My own trips have generally been on behalf of newspapers, magazines, radio and television. I have lived in Japanese company towns, investigated winter playgrounds in the Caribbean, made TV films about coffee planters and cattle barons in South America, toured Soviet factories, covered financial conferences in Copenhagen and Rio de Janeiro, opened exhibitions in Ottawa and Chicago, interviewed financiers in Zurich and New York, addressed seminars in Amsterdam, Brussels and Toronto, lectured in Charlotte North Carolina, Louisville Kentucky, and Cleveland Ohio, exhausted myself on promotion tours which took in dawn TV shows in San Francisco and midnight 'phone-ins' in Philadelphia, attended breakfast meetings in Los Angeles and Washington, eaten my way through five courses at working dinners in Berlin and Paris, and taken part in disgraceful (but memorable) binges in Rome and Hamburg.

I have talked to ministers in Australia, Egypt, Israel, India and South Africa and argued with waiters and doormen in places as far apart as Moscow and Hong Kong. I have made disconcerting blunders and said many stupid things. I have

been cheated countless times (one tends to be so much more gullible abroad than at home) and I have had some distinctly uncomfortable moments. I have also learned that business trips can be an awful bore. There is nothing glamorous about going to Hamburg, Milan or New York for the twenty-second time. Colleagues and friends, confined to desks at home, have an irritating habit of pretending that it's all a holiday. 'Hamburg, eh?' they say with a knowing wink. 'Lucky devil.' They wouldn't do it if you were going to Bradford or Birmingham — though I dare say that Frenchmen or Italians despatched to those very ordinary cities have to put up with the same kind of sniggering comment. I am, nevertheless, glad that my work has given me the opportunity to get around. 'Travel narrows the mind,' said Malcolm Muggeridge — and Chesterton before him. I don't agree. It may *concentrate* the mind, in the sense that one is able to sort out one's likes and dislikes instead of taking refuge in fancy dreams, but it also makes one more outward looking. Travel makes it easier to understand, if not approve, and whittles away those nationalistic prejudices which have done so much harm over the centuries.

I dare say that my boyish enthusiasm on first visits to some countries — India, Egypt and the United States spring instantly to mind — has amused many people and irritated many more. To me, you see, there is nothing quite like first impressions. You discover a lot about yourself, as well as the country, when you ride your first elephant, spend your first evening looking at the Taj Mahal, and test your first reaction to India's poverty. The books you have read about ancient Egypt come to life as you explore the Valley of the Kings at Luxor, and the films you have seen about America mean much more when you have actually sampled New York, Los Angeles and Chicago.

I well remember the first time I saw New York, and the pleasure and sense of discovery it gave me. It's something which I have never quite managed to recapture and I am full of regrets that I didn't make more of it at the time. To the professional — the man whose job involves a lot of travel — tourists tend to be what Sunday drivers are to travelling salesmen. They are innocent, over-enthusiastic, and absurdly careless. And, of course, they keep getting in the way.

But I feel about some countries the way I do about films or books I have enjoyed: I wish I hadn't been there so that I could have the pleasure of seeing them for the first time all over again.

Not, mind you, that one's impressions are always pleasant. There are places I wouldn't want to re-visit even if they doubled my expense account. I once spent a Christmas in Bethlehem, for example, and hated every minute. The chairman of the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce (yes, there certainly is such a thing) calls his town 'the Sheffield of the West Bank'. He exaggerates, but not by much. I made my way past the Good Shepherd's Store, the Granada Grill, the Holy Manger Store, half a dozen Coca-Cola signs, Barclays Bank, coloured lights, and a huge television screen. Lo, this was Manger Square. The Church of the Nativity was ugly. I don't think I will ever forget the cheap-looking gilded throne and, worse, the vulgar blue neon sign — 'Gloria in Excelsis'. The service was uninspiring: the Latin Patriarch went on for several hours in a flat, disinterested voice. 'Jesus', Israel's Minister of Police told me, 'would never have got permission to attend the service. Judas might'. It seemed an entirely appropriate comment.

Not long ago, a seventy-three-year-old Australian called Ronald Lee took one of Britain's leading travel firms to court because, he said, their tour had failed to live up to the promise of the brochure. Among other things, Mr. Lee complained, the Tower of Pisa didn't lean half as much as he had been led to believe it would. He lost his case because, the Judge said, 'no one but a child or an unsophisticated person takes glossy brochures literally.' It was 'very rare that the sea and sky are as blue as they are made out to be, that the flowers are so brilliant, and the women so beautiful'. I know just what he means. The people who take those photographs always seem to have been there on the one day of the year when everything is perfect. The beaches are virtually deserted and free of tar; there are no paper cups and whisky bottles floating in the sea; the food is at its best; and there are Nubile Young Things grouped around the bar. But one can hardly expect a tour operator to do anything else. A reputable firm will try its best to deliver, because it knows that a disappointed customer is likely to take his business elsewhere next time. But every place has off-days, and

there is little anyone can do about the overcrowding in popular holiday months like August.

Brochure writers are fond of words like 'vibrant', 'carefree', 'casual', 'sophisticated'; Soho is 'naughty' and 'suggestive'; Montmartre is 'provocative'; New York 'dynamic'. There are some 'lusty' bars in Amsterdam and the night life in Copenhagen, as Lord Longford would agree, is 'controversial'. Switzerland seems to consist of nothing but *fondues*. Italy — 'that marvellous boot-shaped country jutting out into the Mediterranean' — has the Sistine Chapel as well as the Tower of Pisa and when you've had enough of Michelangelo you can eat among 'volatile journalists' in the Piazza del Popolo.

Walk into the local tourist office, next time you are abroad, and pick up a brochure describing your own country. It's the greatest tonic I know: you'll be amazed and delighted that you live in such a splendid part of the universe. See it through the eyes of an enterprising and starry-eyed visitor, glad to escape the everyday problems back home, and you may even start to believe the propaganda. Many Americans, for example, show an almost embarrassing enthusiasm for Britain. They have seen all the best bits (tourists often see more of a country in two weeks than the inhabitants do in a lifetime) and can be terrifyingly knowledgeable. Their world is one of castles, theatres, 'boisterous Elizabethan hideaways', spectacular Scottish and Welsh valleys, medieval banquets, well-stocked museums. The break with routine more than makes up for things like bad weather. The same, of course, applies in reverse. I love cities like New York, which I visit at least twice a year. My American friends can't understand it. 'Now *look*,' the anchor man of one of the big chat shows once said to me with barely controlled anger, 'you foreigners are all the same. You come here, walk down Fifth Avenue, and say you like the place. Let me tell you about the violence, the drugs, the kids, the pollution.'

Embassies and tourist offices, like brochure writers, have a vested interest in looking on the bright side. Some do, however, admit to certain shortcomings ('There are', says the official Indian tourist handbook, 'no night clubs in India') and one usually gets a brief rundown on local customs. A colleague who went to India for the first time last year was told by a solicitous

official that 'if you date an Indian girl at a party, she'll either never reappear or come round with six friends'. Such warnings are as useful as, say, advice on which way round to sit on the bidet and what to do when the toilet is a hole between two giant footprints. But it is obviously unwise to rely on brochures and tourist pamphlets for your briefing. More surprisingly the same goes for most independently published guide books. They tell you that Bulgaria is a country of happy laughing people, or that the British are a handsome, sturdy people, clean-limbed, clear-skinned, led by a Queen who is a great human being and ever in the van when it comes to splicing ropes in Girl Guide Camps. They seldom prepare you, though, for some of the traps which await the unwary.

An honourable exception is *Fielding's Guide to Europe* which includes useful tips on 'local rackets'. (I also admire Fielding for packing a strong light bulb on a flex, so that he can read in hotels.) Most of these rackets are familiar enough to the professional traveller, but they certainly can — and do — trip up the amateur. Different laws and regulations, unfamiliar codes of behaviour, alien languages, unaccustomed attitudes to money, clothes, speech and sex — they are all a potential source of trouble, or at least embarrassment. It's easy enough to be caught off guard at home; it's a great deal easier in a strange environment, especially after a long and tiring journey.

Every country has taxi-drivers who regard all visitors as fair game. If you don't know your rights you are effortlessly cheated; a hoary old trick is to 'forget' to switch on the meter so that, at the end of the trip, you are confronted with a double or triple estimated fare. Hotels and restaurants are experts at padding bills (always check every item, even if you risk looking mean) and waiters often have an appalling memory when it comes to giving change. Nightclubs will sell you phoney whisky (at, of course, an exorbitant price) and street salesmen will try to palm off cleverly faked 'branded merchandise' like pens, lighters, and watches.

In Naples, where they pride themselves on their expertise, fishermen now buy frozen fish, unfreeze it and put it into a net, row out to sea for an hour or so, and then sell it to gullible customers as fresh. During the war, ten-year-old Neapolitans,

with innocent faces and liquid brown eyes, used to 'sell' Americans on the open market. They would introduce a soldier to their family, make him feel at home, and persuade him to bring food parcels for his poor, starving friends. This immediately gave him a commercial value, and there was a brisk trade in lonely Yankees, with blacks usually commanding the highest prices. The ten-year-olds are now balding, paunchy masters of a thousand dodges. People all over the South, including Sicily, are always on the lookout for Americans in need of a family tree. Some years ago I came across a businessman from Los Angeles who had been told, back home, that his great-grandmother was born in a tiny village south of Salerno. He'd come to investigate. When he arrived the entire village turned out to welcome him to the bosom of the largest family any man has ever had. Two days later he went home, cleaned out but happy.

Visitors to Rome and Naples will sometimes find themselves accosted by smart men offering to exchange their currency into lire at a favourable rate. They may be honest (please don't think that I look on all Italians as cheats) but I urge you to have nothing to do with them, even if it's a weekend and the banks are shut. You may not fall for some of the more obvious tricks — substitution of pesetas, or bundles of banknotes made up of two genuine notes on the outside and blank sheets of paper in between — but it takes an expert to recognise counterfeit money and, believe me, it exists. In other countries, such as the Soviet Union, currency swapping may be illegal and the unwary traveller could find himself in gaol.

Many countries take an equally firm line towards that seemingly innocent object — the camera. There may be military installations in the vicinity whose existence you never even suspected. I once watched an Egyptian policeman pounce on a large, red-faced American tourist who was taking pictures of his wife at Luxor airport. It took him over an hour to convince the authorities that he wasn't an Israeli spy. The reason for their caution became obvious when our plane circled over the airport: it was surrounded by fortifications. A professional spy equipped with a miniature camera could have taken splendidly revealing shots out of the window; there was no police aboard to stop him. I had a similar experience when I tried to take

photographs at the half-submerged Philae Temple. My guide waved frantically as he saw my camera and shouted 'Forbidden! Forbidden!'. The Temple is near the old Aswan Dam, but there was nothing in sight which could be remotely described as a military installation. Police in some countries will stop one taking pictures of bridges and railway stations, and over-excited officials are liable to arrest offenders on the spot. They may also take a dim view of attempts to photograph the arrest itself. Communist countries and African dictatorships are notoriously sensitive about this, but one is just as likely to encounter it in America. Not long ago Lord Snowdon, a photographer for *The Sunday Times*, was taking pictures of police action in Detroit. An officer promptly took him into custody and he was carted off to the police station. He explained that he was a member of the British Royal Family, that he had an assignment to produce a press feature on Detroit, and that the authorities had pledged their readiness to co-operate. They refused to believe him — until, eventually, Lord Snowdon's story was confirmed by the city fathers. He was released with a grudging apology, but the incident underlined the risks involved in certain types of photography.

Social gaffes are less dangerous but, as a rule, bad for business. Behaviour which works in one country may easily give offence in another. No one will expect foreigners to be acquainted with every custom, and there is no reason to overdo it. A Japanese businessman won't mind if you offer to shake hands instead of bowing, and your German host won't feel hurt if you fail to make a great show of pretending to kiss his wife's hand. (If you do, remember that it's considered bad manners to bring the lips to within less than six inches of the hand in question.) But both will expect a certain basic knowledge and a large measure of tact. One should not, for example, discuss business unless the host has first indicated his willingness to do so. And one should never, never lecture others on efficiency — even if such lectures appear to be badly needed.

In Germany and Holland businessmen set much greater store by punctuality than in Italy or Spain. They take a dim view of anyone who turns up late for a meeting, or goes into a conference without being fully briefed on the subject to be discussed. In Italy they attach great importance to the use of

titles; it is not unusual to hear two distinguished gents address each other as 'Illustrious Professor' or 'Esteemed Doctor'. And you may have your hand held for two or three minutes while the other fellow makes a little speech of welcome; it's bad form to retrieve it before the holder is prepared to let it go. In France you may be expected to kiss the wife of even a casual acquaintance on both cheeks. (But wait until she's given a hint and try not to be over-enthusiastic.) In Britain there's less handshaking and kissing, but you will never be forgiven if you smoke at a public dinner before the host staggers to his feet and proposes the loyal toast.

Europeans are often offended by the North American habit of addressing everyone by his first name as soon as he is introduced. The Italian Professor and the German *Herr General-director* don't take kindly to being addressed as 'Mario' or 'Hans'. By the same token. Americans resent certain European habits. Russell Braddon, Lord Thomson's biographer, recalls that when the brash Canadian publisher — then plain Mister — first came to Britain, someone sent him a letter beginning: 'My dear Thomson'. He disliked it intensely. 'Is this guy getting at me?' he asked his personal assistant, who explained that English gentlemen often began their letters not only as if they were enamoured of each other but also as if they were still at school. 'Well,' Thomson said, 'we've all got handles to our names and I think they should be used.'

A lot of trouble can obviously be avoided if one does a little homework before setting off on an overseas trip. The rest is largely a matter of common sense. It is common sense, for example, to go along with the Japanese — and continental — enthusiasm for business cards. They not only give an instant clue how the other man wishes to be addressed (some carry details of even the most obscure academic achievements) but also come in handy if and when you need to remember his name afterwards. A good memory for names is a gift which, alas, is not granted to everyone and the visitor to countries like Japan and India, where both names and spelling may be complex, tends to find the task especially daunting. I dare say the locals feel the same about you. Many businessmen carry cards which have their names and essential details in English on one side and in the language of the country they expect to visit on

the other. It is a flattering gesture which seldom goes unnoticed — or unappreciated.

This is a book about business travel, and I hope you will find it both entertaining and profitable reading. Business has become increasingly international and for airlines like British Airways the business executive is a very important person indeed. This is particularly true in Europe, where he accounts for nearly half the total traffic. The average European business traveller, statisticians tell us, is 40·1 years old and makes ten flights a year. He is 89·6 per cent male, 10·4 per cent female. He has 1·9 children, owns 1·2 cars, and left school when he was 17·1 years old. What the figures don't tell you is that he is also anxious to make good, usually in a hurry, and mostly a loner. He may even be a *she*: female executives are still in a minority but their ranks are growing. And the term business travel covers other people besides businessmen. A football team travelling to a European cup match, a film unit flying to Spain or Yugoslavia, a jockey going to a race fixture, a diver joining an oil rig, a dentist going to a conference, the London Symphony Orchestra going to Paris — they all qualify for inclusion. There are study tours and incentive trips, trade fairs and exhibitions, missions and seminars. There are binges whose only outcome is a ghastly hangover and day-trips which produce contracts worth millions. My observations are based partly on personal experience, and partly on conversations with other travellers, airline officials, travel agents, bureaucrats, ministers of tourism, customs officers, stewards and stewardesses, airline captains, conference organisers and many others involved in this vast and still growing industry. It would be absurd to pretend that I have found all the answers, but I shall be glad if it helps to make your own trips more enjoyable.

There is a nice (though no doubt apocryphal) story of what happened to Dr. Ramsey, then Archbishop of Canterbury, when he went on his first business trip to New York. A large group of reporters confronted him at Kennedy airport. 'Archbishop', one of them demanded to know, 'do you plan to visit any strip clubs while you're in the city?'

His Grace decided to play it cool. '*Are* there any strip clubs in New York?' he asked innocently.

The next morning's papers carried this banner headline:

BRITISH ARCHBISHOP'S FIRST QUESTION:
ARE THERE ANY STRIP CLUBS IN NEW YORK?

Don't say you haven't been warned.

CHAPTER ONE

SIGN HERE

If the 'heaviest baggage for a traveller is an empty purse', then the lightest must surely be an expense account. Travel is much more pleasant when someone else is paying: bills are less of a burden, being cheated is less painful, and one is more likely to make friends. Expense accounts breed self-confidence, generosity, and good humour. They keep smart restaurants in business (a worthy enough cause in itself) and support countless people who might otherwise starve. They are also good for trade. Anyone who doubts it need look no further than the land of economic miracles, Japan. It revolves almost entirely around the expense account: spending on entertainment alone exceeds Japan's defence budget and almost equals Ireland's gross national product.

In Britain, expense accounts go back at least to Francis Drake, whose account books, itemising his expenses in the year of the Armada, came up for auction not long ago. In America, George Washington collected nearly half a million dollars in expenses for routing the British. Marvin Kitman, who wrote a book about it, says The Man Who Could Never Tell a Lie used forty-two basic principles of expense account writing, including many still used today. His fundamental principle was 'be specific on the smaller expenditures and vaguer on the large ones'. Describe in depth the purchase of a ball of twine, but casually throw in the line 'dinner for one army'. He also favoured the escalation principle — each entry should be higher than the former.

Washington's expenses for winning the War of Independence came to the equivalent of £81,284 and this was at a time when a private in the Revolutionary Army got about 25p

a month and major-generals just over £6. On the first day he put in for £329·42. His entry reads:

To Cash paid for saddlery, a letter case, Maps, Glasses, etc. etc.

Congress didn't question the etceteras; it was in no mood to quibble. Expenses are sometimes used as a thinly disguised form of bribery, but my favourite story involves an American business executive who lost a thousand dollars at some gambling table in Alaska and decided that his firm, which had sent him out there, should be made to pay. On his return he presented an expense account which read as follows:

Lonely in Alaska, bought dog	$350
Dog lonely, bought bitch	$300
Dog ill, medical expenses	$170
Dog died, funeral expenses	$140

The company accountant triumphantly pointed out that the total came to only $960. 'Oh,' said the executive, 'I forgot.' He produced his pen and added:

Flowers for bereaved bitch $40.

When the Labour Party won office in 1964, its Chancellor tried to spoil the fun for British businessmen. Too many, he suggested, were daily eating themselves into a stupor at the taxpayer's expense, and then driving, in the company's car, to the company's penthouse, in preparation for their weekend on the company's salmon river, yacht, or grouse moor. He went on to announce that 'subject to a limited exception for the entertainment of overseas buyers, expenditure on business entertainment incurred after today should in general be completely disallowed for tax purposes'. Some commentators thought, at the time, that it would mean the end of the Good Life. It didn't — and I told Mr. Callaghan as much when, as Financial Editor of *The Guardian*, I took him to expense account lunches at the *Terrazza* and *Tiberio*.

A good deal of phoney indignation is sometimes worked up,

in the press and elsewhere, about the perks of business life. Hardened journalists claim to be shocked that this sort of thing goes on. Can their editors ever forgive such ignorance? 'This sort of thing' certainly goes on in the newspaper world: it is no accident that expense forms have been known for years as swindle sheets.

Perks are a popular feature of our system. (And not only ours; who do you think pays for those *dachas* provided for prominent Soviet citizens?) The reason is not that British businessmen are essentially dishonest, but that the present level of taxation is considered to be confiscatory. Inevitably, they vary in scale. At one end we have free trips for transport workers. At the other, company yachts. In between are cars — sixty-five per cent of British executives have company cars — boxes at Ascot, theatre seats, flats, and financial help with sending children to fee-paying schools. Some executives have their home telephone bills paid, and a number of companies operate share-option and profit-sharing schemes. Most of these perks go to senior management, but several trade unions have also taken to negotiating fringe benefits for their members.

Expense accounts do not, strictly speaking, rate as a fringe benefit. They are, after all, meant only to cover expenditure incurred — to quote the Inland Revenue — 'wholly, exclusively and necessarily in the performance of' the duties of a businessman's office or employment. Most executives do not have accounts as such: they have to take each bill along to the company's accountant who usually exercises his right to be pedantic. Was it *really* necessary to have the Lafitte '59? Wouldn't a later, and cheaper, vintage have done just as well? And how about this Duck Normand at £3·59, with truffles *and* calvados?

It is not, thank God, his job to demand proof that the expenditure has brought in new business — though if he happens to be both accountant and managing director, or head of a department, there may occasionally be some quite uncomfortable moments. The managing director himself has an easier time: he only has to persuade his fellow directors, most of whom probably enjoy similar facilities and are unlikely to jeopardise them by making trouble for a colleague. But he still has to deal with a more severe critic — the tax inspector. The Inland Revenue

keeps a wary (and, also, expert) eye on the executive world and one's chances are not helped by the fact that most of its employees are overworked and underpaid. 'The art of taxation,' wrote Jean Baptiste Colbert in the seventeenth century, 'consists in so plucking the goose as to obtain the largest amount of feathers with the least amount of hissing.' Today they don't even mind the hissing.

The rules of the game are set out in an official sixteen-page booklet, and there are two sections which particularly concern us here — those dealing with business travel. It brings us back to that splendid bureaucratic phrase 'wholly, exclusively, and necessarily in the performance of'. The rules say that the sole motive of your trip must be business. If you take a couple of days off at the end of a long and exhausting trip, and spend them sightseeing, the cost is non-deductible. If you take your wife along on a trip (see Chapter Six) and your company agrees to pay the extra bill, the Inland Revenue is still liable to tax you 'except so far as the expenses of her journey can be allowed under the ordinary expense rule as being incurred wholly, exclusively and necessarily in the performance of the husband's duties'. The qualification is obviously important: it means the tax inspector will relent if you can convince him that 'she has some practical qualification directly associated with her husband's mission which she uses to assist him regularly during the tour, or where her presence is necessary to act as hostess at a series of business entertaining occasions which are an essential part of the mission'. Her expenses may also be allowed where the husband's health is so poor that it would be unreasonable to expect him to travel alone. You won't, however, be able to claim that a month's absence from home may cause irreparable damage to your marriage; taxmen will counter that marital problems are none of their business.

The rules clearly offer a good deal of scope for argument. Let's assume, for example, that you are in Tokyo and your Japanese business partner invites you to stay over for a weekend on the golf course. The word business is never mentioned once. Does it rate as a holiday or will the Inland Revenue accept that, if you had declined, your firm would have offended — and perhaps lost — a valuable customer? And how do you establish a wife's usefulness on a business trip? Do you

ask your guests to sign a testimonial swearing that, but for her presence, your cocktail party or dinner would have been a complete disaster?

The scope widens when one looks at the section dealing specifically with entertainment. Under the 1965 Finance Act (Callaghan's Revenge) any allowance specifically earmarked for this purpose cannot be deducted from the company's tax liability. In other words, the board can give you an expense account but it will have to pay tax on it. And you are still liable to be taxed yourself. You have to prove to the taxman that you are required for genuine business reasons to entertain customers, suppliers, or other business connections in the course of performing your duties.

Simple enough? Ah, but 'no allowance can be given for entertaining personal friends or business acquaintances where there is no business obligation to entertain them. Reciprocal entertaining between business acquaintances, even though some business topics happen to be discussed, may be really for social and not business reasons and, if so, this expense is not allowable.'

Who decides what constitutes a business obligation? And how does one distinguish between social and business reasons? The two are frequently mixed up together. 'Men that can have communication in nothing else', wrote Thomas Carlyle, 'can still rise into some glow of brotherhood over food and wine.' Yes — and into a mutually profitable business relationship.

The Act produced a further complication in the controversial person of the foreign buyer. His lunch remained chargeable to the Exchequer, while the native buyer's food and drink had to be paid for by the company. Some firms, interpreting the Act too liberally, assumed the rules applied to *all* foreigners. Not so. He had to be 'a customer, or potential customer, for the goods, services and facilities which it is the United Kingdom concern's trade or business to provide'. And he had to carry on trade outside, not within, the U.K. It ruled out local representatives of foreign firms, and it made for something of a problem if Herr Schmidt from Hamburg started off his lunch with you as a buyer, but eventually (so crafty, these Germans) ended up as a seller.

It isn't difficult to visualise the kind of fellow who drew up

these regulations. Fortunately they are, on the whole, interpreted with a fair amount of common sense. The taxman has the right to give certain dispensations, and in practise the system isn't quite as chaotic as it might appear. This is especially true of business travel; if the Inland Revenue were to check on every single detail the whole overloaded machine would quickly come to a halt. It is, however, advisable to take a few precautions. (They might, after all, decide to make an example of you.) Make sure that the company *requires* you to go — it helps to have something in writing — and let your accounts department provide the necessary funds. Keep a record of your business appointments (the inspector may ask to see your itinerary *and* diary) and as many receipts as possible. It adds up to a lot of tiresome paperwork, but it can save a good deal of trouble.

Some companies maintain flats abroad, and directors of large corporations frequently sit on the boards of various subsidiaries — who, naturally, pay whatever expenses are incurred on their visits. Watch them go off to Australia and Jamaica in the winter months: an inspection tour can take up a gratifying amount of time in the sunshine. Then there are those splendid company junkets (of which more later) and the many excursions organised by thoughtful foreign trade ministries, associations, and business associates. Some of the bolder tricks are nowadays known as the unacceptable face of capitalism and the Government is constantly tightening the net. But we are an island which, as we are so often reminded, depends heavily on exports, and even the most heartless tax inspector accepts that trade involves a great deal of travelling. He also accepts that, as a Scottish judge declared many years ago in an edict which still holds good, 'no man in this country is under the smallest obligation, moral or other so to arrange his legal relations to his business or his property so as to enable the Inland Revenue to put the largest shovel into his stores.'

Getting your expenses past the taxman is not, alas, the only hurdle. You may also, at some time or another, find yourself up against exchange control regulations. Citizens of countries in desperate need of foreign currency — like India — are much more handicapped than any Briton, but that isn't much con-

solation. There are, after all, plenty of countries which are better placed than we are, including Germany and the United States.

Exchange controls are an official attempt to regulate the money going in and out of a country, and they arise chiefly from balance of payments problems. Britain has had to live with them for more than thirty years. Like income tax, they started as a temporary measure and have stayed because governments can't manage to make ends meet. Not ours, anyway. The Treaty of Rome provides for free movement of capital, which means that the whole elaborate system is against the Common Market rules. But controls are politically less embarrassing, in times of financial trouble, than higher interest rates and other curbs. So the 'national interest' prevails.

A full list of all the regulations would fill a separate book, but the basics are set out in a *Notice to Travellers*, published by the Bank of England, which commercial banks are required to hand out to anyone who applies for foreign currency, travellers' cheques or other finance. The Notice is a distillation of the 1947 Exchange Control Act, with the addition of a few threats. You are, for example, urged to 'treat with the greatest caution anything you may read or be told about ways to get around the rules'. I have no wish to get anyone into trouble, so you won't read anything here about how to pull off clever financial coups up and down the Caribbean, or how to arrange to be paid in Luxembourg, or how to make lovely little deals with foreign business friends. What ought to chill everyone's blood is the Bank's additional warning: 'Banks and travel agents have been requested to refer to the Bank of England cases where a traveller draws unusually large sums in travel allowance for private use.' Let us spell it out in block letters. YOUR FRIENDLY BANK MANAGER WILL SHOP YOU AT THE DROP OF A CHEQUE. He lives by rules, no matter who makes them or whether they make sense, and he is not going to risk getting caught up in a Treasury investigation. He knows (which you may not) that Whitehall has a team of experts whose full-time job it is to track down offenders. They know all the tricks and, as one of them once told me with a smile, 'we try to scare the hell out of businessmen from time to time'.

When Labour was in power, Chancellor Jim Callaghan fixed

the travel allowance at £50 — a figure so absurdly low that the temptation to avoid it was enormous. People carried bundles of £5 notes in their coat pockets and suitcases; the ladies transported them in their bras and corsets. (It wasn't as unusual as you might think — people in Latin American countries had done all this for years.) Roy Jenkins later raised the figure to the equivalent of £300 in foreign currency, plus £25 sterling. But the restrictions on its use remained. You are not, for example, allowed to nip into an insurance office in Lyons or Naples to buy a £1,000 policy cashable at age sixty-five, with accrued benefits. Nor are you permitted to buy stocks and shares. It may be more thrifty and responsible than handing your money to a surly croupier, but it's illegal. Above all, you cannot use your allowance as a deposit on a house. (If you *must* live among foreigners and their wretched sun you have to pay a premium which, at times, has been as high as eighty per cent.) Your travel allowance is for 'normal personal travel expenditure; for example, accommodation, meals, outings, souvenirs, etc.'. Yes, souvenirs. The Bank of England is happy for you to squander your money on plastic Eiffel Towers, but it is dead against any attempt on your part to make prudent investments. It claims to know what kind of travel expenditure is normal, and by normal it means self-indulgent, frivolous, wasteful. At home, meanwhile, your fellow citizens are ruining the balance of payments, quite legally, by buying foreign cars at £3,000 a throw.

The Bank won't let you supplement the allowance by borrowing foreign currency abroad and stresses that, unless you have permission, you may not take out any gold coin, bullion or postal orders. But it will let you stretch your funds in several other ways. You can, for example, double the allowance by taking your wife along. (She is entitled to the same amount as you.) And you can pay for hotel accommodation in advance, either through U.K. bank or a travel agent, without deduction from the total. The business traveller, moreover, can apply for a substantial extra allowance. And he can generally use his credit card.

To me, the latter is the greatest blessing — a loyal friend. It has bailed me out more than once. There was, for example, that time I got caught in one of those currency panics which Europe

has lately suffered with disturbing regularity. I was in Cannes and no one would exchange my paper money or my travellers' cheques. Even the local branch of my own British bank was unhelpful. The market, they explained, was closed and until it opened again — perhaps in a week's time — they had strict instructions not to do business with travellers. Hotels were equally reluctant; those that could be persuaded to accept travellers' cheques in settlement of accounts gave a ridiculously low exchange rate. My American Express credit card, though, was readily accepted everywhere. I dare say that, when the credit card company came to convert my expenditure into sterling, it did so at a rate favourable to American Express rather than to me. But it certainly spared me a lot of embarrassment — and of course I had a month's free credit before the little slip of paper came through my letter-box at home.

Credit cards have been called many things. *Life* magazine once described them as 'a dreamy method of buying by signature after the money has run out'. And a New York restaurant owner has been quoted as saying that 'customers use credit cards so they can buy meals they can't afford'. Sociologists are critical. Credit cards, they say, lead to overspending, which often ends in real financial hardship. Some people simply cannot deal sensibly with money. The card makes it all look far too easy — until the bill comes in. In America, the experts claim, credit cards have introduced a new kind of addiction: debt addiction. Once you're hooked, they maintain, it's hard to get away from it. Just as soon as you have paid off one monthly fix, you go out and put yourself in hock to another. It doesn't take long before you are on the stuff for life.

There is no doubt that credit cards encourage lavishness. American surveys show that people spend twenty-three per cent more using cards than they do using cash. Women, particularly, find them irresistible. No one, as far as I know, has ever really analysed how a cashless, chequeless, computerised credit system (said to be not far away) will affect the unsophisticated and impulsive buyer and borrower. One doesn't have to be a sociologist to feel concerned. But to the business traveller the credit card is, without doubt, a most useful companion. It is easy to carry, convenient to use, and safe.

Some, of course, have a wider acceptability than others. American Express is widely recognised everywhere and, therefore, my own favourite. You don't have to worry if your business trip takes you to other countries at a moment's notice, or if more people turn up for a business lunch than you expected. You don't have to fumble with change in restaurants; you merely check the bill and sign it. You can hire a car without paying the usual deposit, and use the card to pay the rental charges. You can walk into an airline ticket office and, without fuss, sign for tickets on over a hundred major international airlines. And you can do whatever shopping you like without running out of currency.

Not least, you have some protection against crime. In cities like New York, where mugging has become a major problem, credit cards are clearly preferable to cash. To some extent this has backfired: non-violent criminals would hold up a person at knife point, with no intention of using the knife other than as a threat to induce the victim to part with his money. Once the cash had been handed over he would go off, leaving the victim poorer but unhurt. But the discovery that the victim had no money at all, only credit cards, sometimes provoked the robber into attacking his literally penniless victim. As a result many New Yorkers now carry, in addition to their credit cards, $5 or $10 of 'mugging money' — cash which they regard as a sort of insurance in case they are held up.

Companies like American Express offer holders free cover against the possible loss or theft of the card itself. You simply notify the nearest office as soon as possible to prevent any personal liability on its fraudulent use; even if you don't discover your loss immediately, your maximum liability is limited to £20.

There are places, it must be said, where even American Express has no influence. Many hotels and restaurants are old-fashioned enough to insist on cash — partly because they don't want to pay the usual commission to the credit card company. An American friend has perfected a device which he calls the 'un-credit card'. You walk into a shop which accepts cards, make your purchase, and then ask the retailer to give you a discount if you *don't* use your card. Since he has to pay up to five per cent to the company, he doesn't lose by saying yes. You also

won't get far if you try your credit card on a porter, guide, doorman, or taxi-driver — though in America, at least it will nowadays be welcome by the local church and mortuary, and even by the taxman. But these are minor drawbacks.

Credit cards are now so common that they can no longer be regarded as much of a status symbol. They simply show that you are creditworthy. But you are still someone if you can get your hands on that most useful of executive perks, the *company* credit card. It permits you to charge expenses directly to the firm, and is not only a token of their trust and esteem but also a simple and easy way of settling your travel bills.

The Bank of England has no objection to the use of credit cards, providing they are issued by companies with whom it has made 'special arrangements' and providing they are not used for any of the aforementioned investments. It also approves of another useful device — the cheque guarantee card. This is something which the banks have developed to compete with 'outsiders' like American Express and it is really self-explanatory: holders can use it to cash personal cheques. There is a ceiling on the amount available, but like the credit card it is a comfortable thing to have in reserve.

Finally, there are those two long established helpmates, the travellers' cheque and the letter of credit. Travellers' cheques are still the most widely used form of finance. They are simple to handle and many shops offer discounts if you pay with cheques rather than local currency. But the small provincial innkeeper in Europe may not be acquainted with the name of your bank and you may have difficulty convincing him that the proffered cheques are valid. The same is certainly true of the United States and I generally try to get American Express cheques, or cheques expressed in the currency of the country I am about to visit. It saves a lot of bother, especially now that so many currencies are 'floating'. I also make a point of buying foreign currency before I leave because one usually gets a better rate of exchange at home than abroad. And I always try to avoid changing *anything* at a hotel, because it invariably means a poor rate.

If you are used to handling travellers' cheques you will know how important it is to sign them as soon as your bank hands them over, and to list all the numbers on a separate slip of

paper. If they are stolen or lost that paper will enable you to get your money back in a fraction of the time that might otherwise be necessary.

Letters of credit are useful to business travellers who need more than they can conveniently carry even in travellers' cheques. They generally consist of a card to identify you, and an open letter to your bank's agents throughout the world authorising them to allow you to draw cash from them. Each withdrawal is entered on the letter of credit itself until the total reaches the stipulated limit. If you are going to a specific place, and plan to stay for some period of time, you can also arrange to have money transferred to the local branch or agent. A more recent innovation is the so-called Eurocheque. This is a scheme set up by a number of European banks and it means, briefly, that any member will cash a cheque on your account back home providing you produce the appropriate bank card.

Banks need business customers to survive, even to prosper, and therefore compete for their favours — not so much because they like them as individuals but because they make decisions involving thousands, and sometimes millions, of pounds. The traveller in search of lucrative contacts can count on an impressive amount of advice and help. The advice takes many forms, from briefing papers and introductions to overseas branch managers to legal counsel and guidance on negotiations with local finance ministries. The help ranges from export finance to the formation of consortiums willing and able to raise money on the spot. Banks can be infuriatingly bureaucratic, and the giants in this field have a natural but irritating habit of playing safe. On the whole, though, they try very hard to steer you through the minefield of exchange controls and other obstructions.

For me, all exchange controls are a gift to bureaucracy and therefore a confounded nuisance. People should be able to spend their money where and how they like. This is certainly the view taken by the more solvent countries, like Germany, and explains why exchange controls have to be self-supporting. No country undertakes to maintain or to enforce the controls of another and there are no extradition laws for breaches of such systems. One would like to think that, one day, they will all be swept away. On present evidence, alas, that seems unlikely.

Governments with balance of payments problems are always tempted to erect national barriers — foreign exchange curbs, import quotas and so on. Politically it is, or seems to be, the easy way out of a nasty dilemma. Ministers are very much aware that actions of this kind tend to be self-defeating, because they stifle enterprise and invite retaliation, but such considerations tend to give way to short-term expediency. Business travel is essential to an island which is heavily dependent on exports and every Chancellor accepts, as he sips champagne in his first class seat on the way to Washington, or Tokyo, or Bonn that petty restrictions will make little difference to the country's payments deficit or to the trade unions' attitude to wage restraint. But currency allowances and forays against 'expense account living' look good in window-dressing budgets and more may well be in the pipeline as this book goes to press. No matter: even our present masters realise that British businessmen can no longer expect the rest of the world to come to them.

CHAPTER TWO

EASY COME, EASY GO

It is possible, indeed easy, to put in a morning's work at the office in London, drive to the airport, take a plane to New York or Chicago, and rush straight to an important afternoon meeting. The difference in time zones gives the business traveller extra hours which, in theory at least, can be put to good use. I have done it myself on many occasions. Doctors, however, are unanimous that such haste is foolish. 'The business tycoon', says Dr. Anthony Turner, Senior Overseas Medical Officer of British Airways,* 'must never go from the aircraft to the boardroom. Wrong decisions will inevitably be made.'

Dr. Turner thinks a twenty-four hour rest should be ensured wherever there has been a long flight with a five-hour time change. This, he explains, is because the time zone syndrome, or circadian desynchronisation, leads to fatigue problems and other psychological upsets. The human body has a daily rhythm (sleeping, waking, eating and emptying of bowels and bladder are all time-controlled) which is affected by such flights and one should give it time to adjust.

Some experts even feel that business travellers are much too sanguine about short-haul trips. 'If you don't believe that there's a fatigue factor and possibly a cumulative anxiety factor in frequent short-haul journeys', says a senior British Airways executive, 'just watch some of our customers losing control of themselves when told of a delayed departure. Or read complaint letters written in flight or just post-flight. The five minute late arrival which so consumed a business traveller at the time is seen later to be insignificant and many travellers do not remember either writing or complaining — or say they were

* In his book, *The Traveller's Health Guide.*

het up. But I personally wouldn't trust them with a major company decision until tensions were relaxed and rational behaviour patterns emerged.'

Perhaps so. But for people like that tension may be a normal state of affairs; they would complain just as bitterly if their taxi or train were five minutes late. And the suggested solution — eight hours sleep between flights — may simply be impractical. You are unlikely to persuade a busy executive that he should take eight hours rest after flying to, say, Milan or Lisbon. You certainly wouldn't persuade *me*. Like most regular travellers I tend to look upon journeys within Europe as little more than bus or train rides. There are, however, ways of easing tension on the way and it may be helpful to list at least some of them.

First, timing. Plan your departure so that there is the least possible disruption in your normal schedule. On short-haul trips, leave in the late afternoon so that you arrive in time for a quiet dinner and an early night's sleep. You will wake up refreshed the next morning, and ready for business. On long-haul trips, try to get a good night's sleep before you go — and, if possible, travel in the daytime. On really long journeys, stop at least once along the way. I once travelled to Australia in one go, and it took me a week to get back to normal. The second time I stopped for a couple of days in Bangkok and not only had a great time but also arrived in a much happier frame of mind. And of course the airline made no extra charge.

Some people like to work until the last possible moment and then rush to the airport. Or they will sit in the hotel bar long after they ought to have got underway. I find this kind of hero maddening to travel with. 'Don't worry,' they say, 'there's plenty of time.' More often than not, there isn't. Taxis are not always easy to find, and the cheerfulness tends to evaporate as you get caught in traffic jams. At the airport everything is a frightful rush, and you start the journey in an irritable state. I prefer to err on the side of caution because that way I stay calm and relaxed.

I also believe in letting others do my homework. It's so much easier to feel relaxed if appointments have been made and confirmed in advance (I know busy executives who have travelled two thousand miles only to find that the equally busy

executive they've come to see left three days earlier for their home town) and if details like hotel and theatre bookings have been taken care of by people who know what they are doing. Secretaries can look after the former; a good travel agent will see to the latter. I used to think that travel agents were a waste of money. I couldn't have been more wrong. It's one thing to plan a trip with the aid of guide books (and find, on arrival, that the hotel you picked is fully booked) and quite another to have a professional doing the job for you. A travel agent can advise on the cheapest and most convenient way to go; plan your itinerary step by step; check hotel availability, arrange transport to and from airports, get last minute flight information, and make confirmed reservations for a whole trip, even concert tickets. And it shouldn't cost you a penny. Travel agents are *agents*. When they sell someone's space or services, they keep part of the revenue as their commission. There is no charge to the traveller.

I have now used the same Fleet Street firm for a number of years and I always find them immensely helpful — even when, as sometimes happens, I have had to recast my schedule at the last moment. Some travel agents give better service than others and even the best make occasional mistakes. But all place special value on the regular business client; his trips pay the rent.

Thirdly, do you take more luggage than you really need? Most people do, because they feel that they ought to allow for every eventuality. On short trips, though, it's often possible to get by with hand luggage only. It will take a little longer to get through security checks — but you will save tiresome waiting in the baggage claim area and be first in the cab queue.

Stirling Moss, one of the most experienced travellers in the world, says he uses a soft canvas bag which is sold under-seat size, and this means that the airlines have given it the O.K. for taking on board. Zippered side pockets accommodate the usual underwear, socks, shirts, woollens and bathing kit, while the centre opens out to reveal an obligingly large area for shoes, trousers, tape recorder, bottle-opener and other things. If he needs an extra suit or two he takes a hanging bag.

On long journeys you can limit your luggage by getting your secretary to check, beforehand, what kind of climate you are

likely to encounter at that time of the year and whether your host or business associate is planning anything which may involve, say, weekend clothes or a dinner jacket. A dark business suit, sports jacket and slacks will see you through all but the most formal occasions. (A cocktail dress will do the same for women.) And if you stick to one basic colour scheme you will find that mixing and matching allows you to make the most of a relatively small amount of clothes. So — take only clothes you can interchange. And if hand luggage is impractical, make sure at least that the luggage you take is as light as possible.

Another friend of mine wouldn't cross a frontier without his bottle opener, screwdriver, tin opener, scissors, corkscrew, and earplugs. He also takes his own soap (many hotels don't supply it) and bath oil, *plus* a hundred-watt bulb for reading in hotels which try to save on bedside lights. (Some of the older Italian and French hotels are notorious for this; there's no point in letting them ruin your eyesight.) He's kept a pair of aeroplane sock-slippers which, together with black eyeshades, were handed to him on a long-forgotten overseas trip and he always packs a small transistor radio 'to catch the local flavour and to entertain me on dull evenings'.

I've been known to leave behind the bottle opener and light bulb myself, but I certainly agree about the earplugs and radio. I'd also urge you not to take any clothes that are brand new or totally untried. Old clothes are so much more dependable — and, of course, you have a good excuse to buy something new when you get there. Not least, remember to pack all film, exposed or not, in your hand luggage, not in the suitcase, which might get X-rayed. Many people tense up the moment they enter an airport building. The atmosphere seems to do something to their nervous system. It may be what doctors call 'anticipatory reactions' — anxiety about the flight, or hotel arrangements, or the important meeting which is the purpose of the trip. Whatever the case, they are apprehensive, jumpy. Having to wait at the check-in counter, and go through security, does nothing to improve this mood. I know the feeling well, because I have had it often enough — especially at airports far away from home where I know that, if something goes wrong, I may be stuck for days in a place I don't much care for. But there is really no point in getting excited. It will simply

raise your own blood pressure; no one else will take the slightest notice. And the probability is that most of these worries will prove to have been quite unnecessary.

Some airports are awful and there is nothing you can do to make them better. In theory, they should be a showcase for the country or city concerned, because the airport is the first (and often the only) place one sees. In practice, many lack even the most elementary facilities — adequate seating, trolleys, clean toilets, and (in hot countries) air-conditioning. Others are so well equipped that waiting is no problem and even a pleasure. Many have good restaurants as well as bars. In London there is a chapel, in Paris a cinema. In Frankfurt (one of the best airports in Europe) you will find row upon row of seats, each with an individual coin-operated television. In the American airports such features have been in use for years, and New York, Chicago and other key airports are almost like small cities. Houston International has its People Mover, an un-manned train controlled, alarmingly, by a Logic Unit. And who could resist the splendid duty-free shops in Hong Kong, Singapore and Milan?

Major international airports also maintain VIP lounges. At Heathrow there are five, including one reserved for members of the Royal Family. The pecking order for the other four is laid down in black and white. They are for foreign ambassadors or foreign diplomats who are to be received by the Foreign Office. There are two other individuals on the list — the Archbishop of Canterbury and the head of the Roman Catholic Church. No Baptists. Definitely no gurus. The rare, possibly the only, advantage of the VIP lounge is that the Customs and Emigration Officers come to *you*. With that exception all the privacy, the free drinks, the service, can be obtained by first class passengers and/or people designated CIPs — Commercially Important Passengers — by the airlines. British Airways, for example, maintain special lounges or executive clubs for the benefit for travellers who spend that extra bit of money. They are usually better furnished than the VIP lounges, the drink is generous, the airline girls are attractive, and you will meet interesting people of all kinds. Entry is by boarding pass or special card, and you are generally sure of a comfortable chair, reading material, drinks, and attentive service. A pretty girl will tell

you when it's time to board your plane, so you can even risk a nap. Not least, modern airports tend to have comfortable hotels close by. They are air-conditioned and sound-proof, and provide free transportation to and from the terminal. Many offer a twenty-four-hour meal service.

It's easier to relax, of course, if one has resisted the urge to commit oneself to a tight schedule — and if there is no need to worry about passports, visas, customs and all the other details. Travelling involves less paperwork than it used to, but this can still prove a nuisance. I confess that experience has made me over-cautious: I like to check and double-check. Everyone knows that airlines take more reservations than they have seats, in order to avoid the loss associated with no-shows. This is where well-disciplined travellers suffer through the carelessness or indifference of others. So I make a point of confirming my reservation — and, for good measure, confirming it again a few hours before departure. It doesn't matter so much on popular routes (if you miss a flight from, say, New York to London, there is always another one close behind) but it certainly counts when there are only two or three flights a week and you have an important appointment back home. You can sue an airline for 'dumping' you, but it tends to be an expensive business and, for me, revenge affords very limited satisfaction. I'd rather be on that plane. I also take what is perhaps excessive care over passport and visas. It's remarkable how many people set off without noticing that their passport has expired. Visas are usually inspected at the check-in counter (no airline wants to be stuck with having to send tired and irate passengers on the next flight home) but there is generous scope for slip-ups. Immigration officials at the other end, alas, cannot be relied upon to have a sense of humour. The late Gilbert Harding was once confronted with a questionnaire at the airport in New York, paragraph 17 of which asked if he intended to take up arms, or in any way exercise violence against the Constitution of the U.S.A. Harding wrote: 'Sole purpose of visit.' He got away with it, but others have been less fortunate. African, and Latin American, and Middle Eastern countries may prove even more difficult. Officials like to go by the book and turn awkward — even nasty — if you seem not to have read it.

To help them, of course, they have those little cards one fills in on the plane. I have always thought them rather futile, but there is no point in arguing with the machine. If you have ever wondered what happens to them the answer is that, according to the book, they are fed into a system which enables the 'authorities' to trace and get you if you misbehave, overstay or find work. Some countries also use the cards to produce statistics of International Tourist Arrivals and Percentage of Age Groups Taking a Holiday in Excess of Four Days — that sort of thing. Much good it may do them.

Visas have been abolished throughout Western Europe, but are still needed for a great many other countries. The smaller the country, the bigger the visa and the greater the fuss. I suppose it's a way of convincing themselves that they are important. The main purpose of visas is, of course, to keep out 'undesirable' visitors. Countries like the United States are quite open about this, but others never actually admit that you are *persona non grata.* They simply file your application and forget about it. I waited several months for my first Soviet visa; as usual, no one wanted to take responsibility for allowing a journalist into the country.

Visitors to Britain say that our own officials can be every bit as awkward as any African or Latin-American counterpart. This is particularly true of people arriving from Commonwealth countries like India or Pakistan. The immigration officer will want to satisfy himself that the passenger is a genuine visitor and not an illegal immigrant, that he can support himself during his stay, and that he has a return ticket.

Much the same applies to customs officers. The traveller is rarely stopped on the way out (though he may occasionally be subjected to a currency check) but every country has the right to decide what may or may not pass across its frontiers and you may run into all kinds of trouble at the other end. The rules are constantly changing and it pays to make enquiries beforehand. American officials are understandably concerned about drug trafficking and occasionally go in for extensive searching. Other countries are particular about horiticultural products and you may find yourself harassed because you failed to declare an apple. Others still have their own ideas about literature, especially if it includes pictures of scantily clad girls. The safest

course is to make a detailed list — or, if that seems too much bother, to answer every question as truthfully as possible.

Heathrow nowadays has two separate entrances for arriving passengers — Red (Goods to Declare), and Green (Nothing to Declare). The rules are posted outside and it's no good saying that you forgot the mink coat absent-mindedly draped over your arm or the high-powered transistor radio stashed away in the bottom of your suitcase. Intent to defraud is essential for proof of a customs offence. But the Court of Criminal Appeal ruled uncompromisingly twenty years ago: 'If the accused not only has goods in his possession but also lies to the customs officer when challenged, there is evidence of intent to defraud.' Many people try it all the same; indeed there is probably a bit of the smuggler in all of us. Those extra cigarettes scattered discreetly between the underpants and the oh-so-casually-draped shirt, how did they get there; and that camera with the false receipt showing half the price? The foreign-looking coat with the Marks and Spencer label? The worst thing about cheating the customs is that you can never be sure you have got away with it. Take the case of the wealthy coffee importer and his wife who found themselves before the magistrates at Uxbridge — the 'home court' for London airport. They were not merely charged with trying to evade customs duty on some jewellery they had recently brought into the country, but also faced a similar summons about two mink coats brought from previous foreign trips. Customs officers had found the two coats at the couple's Mayfair flat when questioning them about the jewellery offence. Result: they were fined a total of £15,000 and suffered what defence counsel called 'the emotional loss' of having all the goods confiscated.

Customs officers sometimes have a quite uncanny memory for faces and past incidents. In April 1970 an American girl left London Airport for New York taking with her a wild mink coat and a sapphire and diamond ring. Questioned about them, she admitted she had bought them in London but, as a foreign-based national, she did not have to pay purchase tax. No problems. In June 1970, six and a half weeks later, the same girl flew back to London airport with another woman and a London businessman. All three walked through the green 'Nothing to Declare' channel. A customs officer recognised the girl — and

remembered the ring and mink coat. He noticed that now the other woman was wearing the ring. Result: all three were stopped. The mink coat was found in the other woman's luggage. And the London businessman pleaded guilty at Uxbridge Magistrates' Court to trying to evade customs duty on the fur coat and ring. He had devised the plot to save himself a total tax of £1,229. It was 'an incredible act' said his counsel. It also proved an expensive one. The goods were confiscated, and he was fined £5,000. Which he paid by cheque.

Professionals have been found smuggling diamonds in golf clubs, half-smoked cigars and pots of face cream, in hollow signet rings, in the stomachs of dogs and pet birds, in multi-pocketed waistcoats worn *under* the shirt — and even behind glass eyes. Cannabis has been carried in the handles of tennis rackets and the air tanks of scuba diving gear. Gold has been smuggled in the robes of priests from Milan. Inflation and fear of devaluation has greatly boosted the traffic in gold, with the kilo-bar (about the size of a packet of cigarettes) and the tentola bar (the size of a piece of chocolate) the most popular. Businessmen in countries which maintain rigid exchange controls are also prosecuted, from time to time, for smuggling currency.

My favourite tale is about a daring coup at the Swiss border near Lugano. Italian customs men had an anonymous telephone call, one day, urging them to look out for a flashy American car with Italian plates. The car, said the caller, would be carrying smuggled gold. The officers duly stopped the car and literally took it apart. The protesting driver, too, was stripped. Hours later they had to admit defeat; they had clearly been the victim of a hoax. They apologised profusely. Four days later the same car and driver passed that way again. The driver stopped, smiled and asked if they planned to repeat their performance. The guards angrily waved him on. An hour later he pulled up in front of a Lugano bank and took out several suitcases — filled with a million dollars' worth of gold.

The ordinary traveller isn't half so clever, and he often betrays himself by his nervousness. Getting caught and fined is only half the punishment; the other is all that embarrassing publicity.

Sleeping pills are very useful to the traveller. If he can time his trip and spend a good part of it sleeping, then he will wake up rested and be able to cope with the challenges ahead. Pills also help the traveller to adjust to the time difference on arrival. Many people find it difficult to take a nap during the day — no matter how long the flight — without assistance of this kind. And I personally always take pills for a couple of nights when I get back from a lengthy journey. Doctors say it isn't habit-forming, and I believe them. They also stress, however, that it's dangerous to take even moderate amounts of alcohol once you have resorted to sedatives. And they strongly disapprove of 'ups and downers' — taking sedatives to calm you down, and then using another drug to give you a boost. Continued use of ups and downers, they say, can be addictive: the combination of a sedative and a booster has the same effect as a purple heart.

Air sickness is comparatively rare, because planes nowadays fly high over the turbulence that underlaid their earlier reputation for inducing instant nausea. But if you have had trouble in the past, take tablets such as Kwells, Marzine and Avomine with you just in case. A small dosage an hour or so before take-off should prevent any serious discomfort. Doctors warn, however, that it may cause visual changes and make you very tired — a factor which, they say, should be borne in mind if you are planning to hire a car from a strange airport.

Forced to choose between pills and alcohol, I unhesitatingly go for the latter. My aim, on long trips, is to remain in a state of gentle, blissful intoxication and my favourite helpmate is champagne. It comes in quarter bottles, so I always start with two, to save time. With it should go a good book — a thriller perhaps, or a not too demanding novel. Some people take small tape recorders, and dictate letters, articles or speeches. Robert McNamara, the much-travelled president of the World Bank, spends most of his flying time studying thick briefing books provided by the bank officials — and, on the return journey, he writes notes which, back in the office, are expanded into long reports. It has made him, according to aides, 'terrifyingly knowledgeable about the countries he's been to'. He seldom eats or drinks while flying — but, one is somehow relieved to hear, he does sleep for an hour or so with the aid of pills. Personally I

find it impossible to work; nor do I really want to — I prefer to relax. During the past few years, my work has taken me across the Atlantic at fairly frequent intervals, and I have always looked forward to the trip. Seven hours give one time to drink, read, listen to music, flirt with the stewardess, have lunch, watch a film, and have a quick nap. The time passes surprisingly quickly.

No matter how sophisticated you get about flying, no matter that you've read and been convinced by the yards of statistics that prove that you are better off in an aeroplane than in a car — even than in your own home — it is still a palm-sweating business for all but the most thick-skinned when the brakes come off, the oomph from the engines pushes you back in your seat, and within seconds, more than sixty tons of aircraft levers back and climbs its way through the clouds into brilliant sunshine. Exhilarating. Easy. Like shelling peas for regular passengers. Only they know that this time it is sixty tons plus them (and that bag did seem *terribly* heavy) that is about to be suspended on thin air and, whatever the physicists say, it still seems pretty unlikely.

I have flown at least half a million miles to date, and there have been astonishingly few bumps, and even few rough landings. I was more than a little anxious, once, when we approached Chicago Airport in thick fog and were diverted at the very last moment, and on another occasion I was shaken when we flew through what seemed like the centre of a severe storm over India. But the only nasty moment I have ever had in the air was in a small private plane, over the Argentine pampas. Below us was nothing but a vast expanse of brown land, with not a single tree in sight. It struck me as even more featureless than the ocean. Imagine, then, my consternation when the pilot calmly asked me, ten minutes after take-off, if I had any idea where we were going. I thought he was joking, but he wasn't. Ten minutes later, while we were still arguing the toss, one of the engines broke down. 'Don't worry,' my brave Argentine said. 'We've still got the other one.'

Modern jets, of course, are well equipped with navigational aids. They generally cruise well above the levels of significant weather, experiencing only the occasional wobbles as the aircraft buffets through patches of turbulence. And in the process

of climbing into and descending from the stratospheric heights, every pilot is supplied with an exact and comprehensive series of reports on what the weather's up to, compiled by an army of observers and experts whose business it is to reduce the guesswork to a minimum. Into the U.K. Central Forecasting Office at Bracknell, Berkshire, and into similar establishments the world over, comes a constant stream of data supplied from meteorological stations, from weather ships in the Atlantic and regular merchant shipping, from radio-sonde balloons despatched to detect the temperatures and humidities at different pressure levels, from computers humming along to digest all of the information and to interpret it. And out into every departing crew's hands goes a coded summary of all the information they need, together with any necessary suggestions for altering their flight path in the event of their not liking the look of the weather en route.

There are, inevitably, occasions when things tend to get a little uncomfortable. My reaction is (*a*) to fasten my safety belt, as requested, (*b*) have another drink and (*c*) remind myself that millions of people fly every year without mishap. Fog is more worrying, especially when you are about to land at a busy airport. Here again, though, modern equipment provides reassurance. Blind landings are becoming more and more frequent; British Airways has logged many thousands and greater use could be made if other countries were not so slow in installing the basic ILS equipment. All major U.K. airports are now able to handle Category III landings, i.e. visibility down to 270 metres, for suitably equipped aircraft.

Many people travel first class because they consider themselves too important to do anything else. It's a status symbol, a public demonstration of their worth. They wouldn't dream of flying economy, even on a fifty-minute trip to Paris.

Well, I can understand that. And, of course, in the case of business travel the firm usually pays. I dare say its reputation — and that of the important executive — would survive the occasional concession to democracy, but first class travel is one of the better corporate perks and it's nice to have it.

The main reason for travelling up front, however, is not snobbery but comfort. At least it should be. Your luggage

doesn't arrive any sooner at the other end, and customs officials can't tell the difference between you and your less fortunate fellow passengers, but you certainly do better while the plane is up in the air. The extra leg-room is useful, particularly if you are likely to be stuck there for eight or nine hours, and the service is good for the nerves. You don't have to wait for your drink, and when it comes it's free. You can work (if you must) and hand your correspondence to the cabin staff who will post it free of charge. If you want to sleep, ask for black eyeshades and a 'do not disturb' label; you will be left alone for as long as you wish. (A word of warning, though. Airlines have a habit of seating people with small children in the first row of the economy cabin. Only a curtain separates you from them — and if you have been unwise enough to choose a seat at the back of the first class cabin you may be kept awake by their youthful exuberance.) The food is considerably better than in economy, particularly on the long-haul routes, and you don't have to queue to go to the lavatory. Indeed, the only drawback involved in travelling first class is, as far as I can see, the possibility that you may overdo it and arrive at your destination thoroughly inebriated.

Not all airlines, alas, are the same. Some can, and will, treat you badly despite your first class ticket. I once travelled to Cairo by a well-known Middle East airline, and resolved never to make the same mistake again. The food was abysmal, the service slovenly, and drinks came in plastic cups. Worse, the airline was in the habit of filling up empty first class seats with tourist passengers — and, of course, that meant noisy children. I wrote a letter of complaint, but by then it was too late.

Competition between long-haul airlines is so strong — especially across the Atlantic — that no one has to put up with that kind of treatment. Most major airlines take a great deal of trouble to attract, and keep, regular business travellers and, like me, you probably have your own favourite airline. All those belonging to the International Air Transport Association charge the same fares to the same places — so since you can't choose an airline on the basis of what it charges you, you might as well pick one on the basis of what it gives you. And when you are travelling, it's always the little things that count. It is absurd, when you really think about it, that people should get

angry on a flight from, say, London to San Francisco, because their steak is rare rather than well-done. They should have tried sailing across the Atlantic three or four hundred years ago. But the airline advertisements ask for it: some of them give the impression that eating a good steak is the sole reason for flying.

There are occasions, on any airline, when the food and service are not all they should be. On short journeys the cabin staff may not have enough time to do their best — especially if the plane is full. Or if the plane is late, the Captain may decide that punctuality is more important than waiting for suppliers to arrive at strange airports. Cooking facilities are much more limited than those of restaurants, and planes *have* been known to run out of champagne. A good steward or stewardess will explain and apologise; if not, the customer has every right to make a fuss.

When *High Life*, the British Airways' in-flight magazine, was launched early in 1973 I arranged a competition among the cabin staff of B.E.A. — now, of course, merged with B.O.A.C. Imagine, I said, that you have Mr. X boarding your flight. He's been abroad on a business trip and he hasn't got the contract. He is late, has a dreadful hangover, and knows his wife will give him hell. How would you cheer him up? Most of the remedies were fairly obvious, but winner Carol Ryan offered what must surely rate as the most effective answer: 'Make him feel important . . . make it difficult for him to continue being unpleasant by being nice . . . knock his argument for six — agree.'

I don't suppose for one second that it will ever happen to you, but if it does, remember to press your call button and ask for Carol.

CHAPTER THREE

OH, MR. CONSUL

EVEN on the best-planned trips, of course, something may go wrong. What would happen, for example, if you lost your passport and your wallet — including cash, credit cards, and travellers' cheques?

You'd be surprised how careless some people are. They leave their travellers' cheques on bank counters, forget to collect their passports from the hotel desk when they leave, and fail to notice that the friendly shopkeeper who has just sold them an expensive trinket hasn't returned their credit card. The opportunities for theft, too, are much greater when you are travelling than when you are living at home. Putting your wallet underneath your pillow is all very well but there is no protection down the side street after dark. 'Mugging' has become a popular sport not only in New York, but also in many European cities. Like car accidents, it's one of those things which always seem to be happening to other people — but there is no guarantee that one day it won't happen to you. And it doesn't have to be in a dark alley: the muggers have grown much bolder in the past few years.

Pickpockets are another threat, and in cities like Rome and Naples you may find your briefcase (or, more likely, your wife's handbag) snatched while you are walking along the crowded streets. Even hotel rooms are not safe. Professional thieves find it relatively easy to get your key from the desk and ransack the room while you are away. And regrettably, hotel staff are not always as honest as they should be.

There are several obvious precautions against trouble. Always sign your travellers' cheques as soon as you have collected them from the bank. And make a note of the numbers: it

makes it much easier to get replacements. On arrival, deposit your valuables — including passport — in the hotel safe. Hotels do not accept responsibility for cash or jewellery left in the room, but they will generally look after them. A moderate amount of cash, plus credit cards, will see you through the day in all major business centres. If you know in advance that you will be entertaining a number of guests at a restaurant, or a night-club, make a point of telephoning beforehand and asking whether they accept your particular credit card.

If you lose your card, or have it stolen, contact the company's nearest office as soon as possible. Once you've reported your loss, the responsibility for any further use passes to them. Even if you don't discover your loss at once there's usually a limit to your liability in case of dishonest use. At the time of writing, this amounts to £20 on an American Express card and £25 on an Access card.

If you lose the lot, and you urgently need money, your best bet is to contact your bank through its local affiliate. You should get it within hours. If you can prevail some means of identification, a Cook's man on the spot can replace lost travellers' cheques with equal facility. British Airways will let you home without paying (the computer will have a record of your ticket purchase) but you must sign a contract promising to indemnify them if the ticket is used fraudulently. Last, but not least, you can always turn for help to the British Consul.

The diplomatic service repatriates more than 3,000 Distressed British Subjects a year. Improvident adventurers, born losers, victims of robberies and revolutions — the list of those who fall by the wayside is more extensive than you might think. When supporters of Glasgow Rangers football club took on the Spanish police in Barcelona, the consulate repatriated sixty-three fans for an outlay by the British taxpayer of £1,558. The ease with which people can now reach faraway places inevitably increases the cost of sending home those who run into trouble. An 'Australia or bust' expedition may well founder at Singapore, having already shed its weaker members anywhere from Calais onwards.

Consuls are not, however, under any obligation to supply you with money for your return fare. And they do not hand out tickets lightly. Advancement in the service is not gained by

becoming known as an easy touch for con-men. Anyone who requests the fare home is asked whether he has approached his bank, his relatives or his friends. While enquiries are being made, he is expected to fend for himself. If his bank doesn't want to know and his relatives 'decline responsibility', the consul endorses the applicant's passport so that it can be used only on the route home, issues him with a ticket he cannot sell and a small sum of sustenance money. The rules say that a person must be sent home by the cheapest route and it may be that air travel is the cheapest in the end.

The distressed traveller signs an undertaking to repay the money. He is also informed that there is now a handling fee of £6·00. Back home, he may refund the advance willingly and even write to express appreciation for the help given him; he may pay up grudgingly, persuading himself that he signed under pressure, or that repatriation is a taxpayer's right, or that a great nation ought to bring home its loyal subjects at its own expense from the corners of the world. The proportion of loans which are unrecovered averages about fourteen per cent.

A lot, obviously, depends on the status of the applicant. The managing director of an engineering firm is likely to get a more sympathetic hearing than a drop-out student. Not that the former is half as likely to need it: his main need, as a rule, is a passport substitute which will see him safely past the immigration desk.

The rule-book leaves a good deal to the consul's discretion, but even a managing director may find her majesty's servants a bit snappish if asked for their opinion on, say, a disputed hotel bill. They see themselves, essentially as contact men and not travel agents, nursemaids, suppliers of motor parts, money-lenders, interpreters, arbitrators, employment officers, defence counsel, bail guarantors, lodging-house keepers, information bureaux or undertakers.

Mind you, the business traveller and his interests do, nowadays, have very high priority. The role of the diplomatic service has changed considerably in recent years: a third of the entire establishment abroad, altogether some 2,000 people, is now engaged on full-time commercial work. This change of emphasis is due to several factors, including the loss of the British

Empire, but easily the most important consideration is Britain's need for a high level of exports. The trade gap takes precedence over almost anything else. Inevitably this produces a good deal of resentment: older career diplomats, particularly, tend to be bitter about the way things have developed. A man who made his way to the Foreign Office via Eton and Cambridge, and whose favourite pastime is to give elegant dinner parties for local ministers, doesn't take kindly to having to look after a group of blunt, hard-drinking woollen manufacturers from Bradford.

The resentment reached its peak during the late 1960's, when the Labour Government's persistent balance of payments worries led to a constant and desperate search for new solutions. As Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh, former Ambassador to Italy, has put it: 'Embassies were in danger of being asked to becomes sales counters and shop windows, and commercial officers were expected by some exporters to do their own job for them. It was necessary to protect the officers from the flood of demands upon their service.'

In 1970 a formula was produced which is worth quoting:

> The basic function of the diplomat is to understand the country in which he works and how it functions and to know the people in it. It follows that his most important task in the commercial field should be to advise exporters on the basis of this knowledge and understanding rather than to undertake a sales role himself. The essence of the service we provide should be to fill a gap in the exporter's own experience, i.e.: knowledge of the market as a whole and of the people in it, how it works and how it may be influenced by the general political and economic background of the country. It is a service based primarily on our training as diplomats rather than one which would be expected of businessmen or salesmen. The task of selling is not for us but for the industrialist or his representative.

These days the diplomatic service in its commercial role regards itself as the 'overseas arm' of the British Overseas Trade Board. Officers are expected to acquaint themselves with the actual and probable course of the commercial policy of the

foreign government, the state of tariffs, health and plant regulations, import and exchange controls, standards and a score of other factors which affect or may affect trade with that country. They must also know who is who in the government, in business, in finance and commerce and be able to introduce visiting British businessmen or officials to the right man in the right place.

According to Sir Evelyn, the service has developed some practical working principles. First, wherever possible exporters should be assisted at home — that is, by the Department of Trade and Industry in London — rather than at posts abroad. Secondly, embassies should concentrate assistance on those companies, products and services likely to contribute most to the balance of payments.

The Department publishes useful little booklets on more than a hundred countries, under the title of *Hints for Business Men*. They include basic information on climate, social customs, official public holidays, currency regulations, customs formalities, and so on. Business travellers are urged to give ample notice to embassies and consulates of their impending visit, and to telephone for an appointment on their arrival. But they are also warned not to expect diplomats to meet them at airports, provide transport or make hotel bookings etc.

The Export Services and Promotions Division, operating from Ludgate Hill in the City, offers free guidance on individual export problems, status reports on foreign firms, details of overseas contract out for tender, help in finding licensees to manufacture particular products overseas, investigation into 'product suitability' for foreign tastes and customs, and even help with overseas publicity. Firms subscribing to its computer service are given tailormade advice: they supply a profile of their needs and receive, individually, whatever is relevant to them from material fed into the computer from the reports of commercial officers around the world.

The D.T.I. claims that no other government offers the same range of services to exporters, and it may well be right. It certainly saves valuable time for smaller firms who are about to enter a market for the first time. A lot obviously depends on the experience and enthusiasm of the man on the spot; some of

the commercial officers I have met personally at embassies abroad have had disappointingly little of either.

But the British diplomatic service is by no means the only source of information. The U.S. Department of Commerce, for example, also offers help for visiting businessmen. There is a special international liaison staff in Washington, and commercial or economic officers at embassies will generally come up with useful — if basic — advice on doing business in the U.S. The Department issues a leaflet called *Businessman's Guide to the U.S.A.*, and subtitled *An invitation from the People of the United States.* I doubt if the People are aware of what is being said in their name, but you might like to have a few samples. Here is its counsel on business cards:

> Bring an ample supply with you. Business cards, to be quickly understood, should be simple and printed in an easy-to-read type face. The card should bear your name and title, plus your firm's name and address. If yours is a long-established business, the year it was founded can also appear on your card for it serves to underscore a company's stability. Do not include advertising of any kind . . .

Having presented your card on arrival for an appointment you will, all being well, meet the man you've come to see. So remember:

> A handshake traditionally opens and closes a business interview. Introductory greetings or farewells are very informal. Whether at business, or to a guest in her home, the American woman will offer her hand in a handshake if she wishes; allow her to make the first move . . . although American businessmen are known for their informality and the use of first names in conversation, do not call a businessman by his first name unless he asks you to.

And, one presumes, vice versa. There is a warning too:

> In your dealings with American businessmen, be prepared for a pace that is probably more accelerated than the one to

> which you are normally accustomed. During your first conversations, present your major points succinctly; minor details can be covered later before agreements are concluded. Because American business is carried on in what may seem rapid-fire fashion, keep a flexibility that permits you to coolly handle unexpected developments . . . Try to bring descriptive material, including photos if required. If you don't have an answer, say so. Your frankness will be appreciated.

Perhaps — but it may also cost you the deal. If the negotiations are going well, you may be asked to continue your discussions over lunch.

> Who pays the check depends on who does the inviting. If you are the guest, make no effort to pay the bill lest you offend your host. If circumstances permit, you can repay hospitality by inviting your host to be your guest at another time. Should you take drinks at the bar before or after your meal, the host also pays this check, which is usually presented separately. If you are a guest, your host will pay the bar bill, but there is no affront in your offering to share the cost of drinks taken at the bar.

And so on. It all seems rather obvious — though not, perhaps, to a Japanese businessman accustomed to a more formal approach. Actual behaviour, you may find, varies much more than these lines suggest: there is a sizeable difference between, say, an engineering company in the Mid-West and the boardroom of one of the older, and haughtier, Wall Street banking houses. But don't shoot the consul — he's doing his best.

Perhaps a few words should be said, before we leave the subject, about one of the diplomatic service's most difficult tasks: looking after citizens who, for one reason or another, find themselves in trouble with the local law. Hopefully, it will never happen to you. But all kinds of traps await the unwary traveller in some countries — notably the Soviet Union and its satellites. What can the consul do for his countrymen in gaol? He can see that they are made aware of what rights and privileges there are; that they are put in touch with English-speak-

ing lawyers; that relatives are informed; that the gaol conditions are tolerable. Whether the consul can pay repeated visits depends on circumstances: the area he serves may be very large and he may not be allowed free movement. The Foreign Office advises travellers: 'In those countries where travel is organised by the government the state travel agency may be better placed to help.' So don't hesitate to try your friendly Intourist office in Khabarovsk. But here again it is best to be forewarned, and the service makes a considerable effort to do so. The British Ambassador in Madrid even took the unusual step, not long ago, of producing a warning poster for one particular class of lawbreaker. It looked like something run off for Carnaby Street. The title, in the sort of vivid, jazzed-up type commonly called psychedelic, said: 'The Game is Not Worth the Candle'. Both title and text would have shaken Lord Curzon. 'This is an open letter to British visitors to Spain' the Ambassador began. 'It has just one thing to say — stay off the hash'. First offenders, he went on, may expect six years and a day. 'We have too many young people in gaol here already; please don't join them.'

Pickpockets and unfamiliar laws are not, of course, the only hazards. There is also the delicate matter of hygiene. A certain British Minister used to take sandwiches with him whenever he ventured abroad because, he explained, 'You can't trust foreigners with food.' It's the kind of behaviour which has earned Britons a reputation for eccentricity, but few travellers go quite that far. I do, however, know people who take their own water and who wouldn't dream of going anywhere without an extensive medical kit. I personally tend to side with Dr. H. Eric Wright, who wrote in the *Director* magazine that 'if the natives can survive, so can the visitor'. A standard gut-rot mixture such as Streptotriad or Guanimycin, he says, is useful if afflicted, as are sleeping pills and Codeine, and an alkali mixture for dyspepsia and over-indulgence is desirable.

A good deal obviously depends on your destination. There is a big difference between going to, say, San Francisco and Bombay. The tropics carry bigger risks than Europe. A cautious traveller will also be influenced by the length of his stay. Dr. Turner's book — mentioned earlier — offers detailed

advice on the subject, and is well worth reading. You won't stop worrying — on the contrary, I was dismayed to find how many things can go wrong — but at least you will learn how to dodge some of the pitfalls.

The starting point, for most of us, is the inoculation at home. Or rather inoculations, because a regular traveller will try to safeguard himself against all kinds of possibilities. They include the risk that the country — or countries — you plan to visit will impose new regulations at very short notice. It can be extremely annoying to find yourself held up at a strange airport, on arrival, because you have neglected to provide yourself with a suddenly needed health certificate.

The British Government publishes a leaflet which sets out international vaccination requirements and recommends various other steps. It notes that, according to where you are going, you need one or more of the following certificates: smallpox, cholera, and yellow fever. If you are being vaccinated against any or all of these diseases, make sure your certificate is on an international form. Smallpox vaccinations have a validity of three years; cholera of six months, and yellow fever of ten years. Some countries may, however, vary these periods and it's advisable to check with embassies or missions before you leave.

The leaflet notes that, whether or not the country concerned *requires* production of a cholera certificate, vaccination is *advised* for travellers to Bangladesh, Burma, India, Laos, Nauru, Nepal, Pakistan, Phillipines, Thailand, Vietnam — and, during the pilgrimage season, Saudi Arabia and Sudan. It provides only partial protection against cholera; the best protection is scrupulous care over food and drink. Food and water, the leaflet adds, can act as vehicles for certain diseases. It is wise, therefore, to 'boil all water before it is used for drinking, washing the mouth or cleaning the teeth, unless it is known to be safe. Similarly, raw vegetables and salads, raw shellfish, cream and ice-cream may be contaminated, and discretion should be used in consuming underdone meat or fish. A high standard of personal hygiene is also of the greatest importance.'

Typhoid and paratyphoid vaccinations are not among those required by law, but are thought advisable for everybody going outside northern Europe or North America. Poliomyelitis vac-

cination, too, is suggested for travellers of any age going anywhere other than to Europe, Canada, and the U.S.A.

What the leaflet doesn't tell you — but your doctor certainly will — is that anyone who regularly needs pills or other prescription items should take enough to last the entire trip. Brand names of medicines differ from country to country and you might not be able to get refills, so it doesn't pay to take a chance. The same goes for glasses: take an extra pair, if you have one. I have also found water-purifying tablets like Puritabs Maxi very useful; one pack sterilises at least 250 gallons.

Most of the rules concerning food are really a matter of common sense. It's obviously daft to insist on rare steak or steak tartar in the tropics. And any cold foods which have been prepared long in advance of serving are likely to have attracted flies. All freshly cooked vegetables, and all fresh fruits with unbroken skins (except, some say, melon), are safe. The same goes for fresh fish, providing it is well cooked. I'd rather eat in a small restaurant, however, scruffy, where they cook on charcoal in front of you than in a large resort hotel where the food has been prepared hours before by a staff whose health cannot be guaranteed. But as Dr. Wright says, if the natives can survive, so can the visitor. If you spend all your time worrying about possible risks, you are liable to end up a nervous wreck.

A sensible precaution is to take out some form of insurance. Because of the National Health Service, many people don't realise how expensive medical treatment can be in other countries, notably the U.S.A. If an operation is involved, the cost could easily top £1,000. A wise employer will automatically insure everyone travelling on company business; it pays to check that he has done so.

Many insurance firms issue policies for this type of cover, and several specialise in travel. The Commercial Union, for example, offers a comprehensive package for the business traveller. Experience suggests a disparity between the amount for which most Britons insure and the possible cost of medical treatment abroad or repatriation, but inflation has made the difference positively dangerous. A medical insurance policy for £500 (the average included in most tour operators' brochures) could well prove to be totally inadequate. It's better to err on

the side of generosity; the extra charge is surprisingly small.

Now that Britain is in the E.E.C., of course, British travellers are also eligible for medical treatment, either free or at a reduced rate, in the other member countries. A Community regulation on social security entitles most Community citizens to treatment on the same basis as nationals. The regulation covers employed persons and their dependants, old age pensioners, widows, and unemployed people seeking work. It excludes self-employed persons and unemployed persons not seeking work in the country they are visiting.

It may be useful to describe, briefly, how this works in practice. Before you leave, you should get form CM1 from your local Department of Health and Social Security office, or any Employment Exchange. Having completed the form, and returned it, you will be sent another form — E111 — which will certify that you are entitled to medical benefits during your stay abroad. Frequent visitors to Community countries (which includes most business travellers) may be issued with a certificate valid for a longer period.

Procedures for obtaining these benefits vary from country to country. In France, for example, you present form E111 at the local sickness insurance office and receive another form (*feuille de maladie*) entitling you to a refund of seventy per cent of the doctor's fees and between seventy per cent and ninety per cent of the cost of the medicine. The local Social Security office will also meet eighty per cent of the cost of hospital treatment, and surgical treatment is paid in full. In Germany and Italy the procedure is similar, but treatment is free. In Holland, doctors' and dentists' fees, and the cost of medicines and hospital treatment, are payable directly by the authorities with no charge to the visitor on presentation of form E111. In Denmark and Ireland you don't even need the form; you simply produce your British passport.

There is another Health Department leaflet which gives full details, and you may want to send for it. Form CM1 is mercifully simple and can be completed in a few minutes. It's a good investment, but the Health Department does offer one warning: where the system provides for a *refund* of medical expenses make sure you get it before leaving the country concerned. If you don't, you may be unable to recover them after

your return to Britain. In any case, there will be considerable delay.

Let's assume now that you have taken all the right steps. So here you are, properly vaccinated and insured, with all the correct forms to prove it. Is there anything else you can reasonably do? Well, you could give a little more thought to Dr. Turner's suggestion of a twenty-four-hour rest between flights. Some doctors have dubbed this the 'add-a-day plan'. By this they mean add one day on each end of the trip. I would go further, and add a weekend. The weekend is a great reviver: there is plenty of time for sleep, golf, sightseeing, reading, or whatever else takes your fancy. Your mind is getting a rest, as well as your body. And, most important of all, you don't owe the office a word of explanation.

This matter of explanation tends to be rather more important than most doctors acknowledge. Companies are not always so understanding. They are inclined to assume that, if you 'add a day', you are trying to get away with a leisurely break at the firm's expense. I have known executives who were curtly recalled by telegram, while they were out on some splendid golf course. The chairman, you see, had never heard of circadian rhythms.

The Institute of Directors, aware of the problem, has produced travel guidelines which companies might incorporate in their own 'standing orders'. But comparatively few have actually done so. Company doctors are not much good at telling business travellers that they should take a few days off when abroad for their health's sake. Even the Civil Service doctors were less than helpful when they said recently that their people were adult enough to know when they needed a rest and so they left it to them.

Cliff Michelmore, a keen amateur golfer, suggests that you mention how bad it is for business 'if you are stumbling about wrapped up inside a body clock that's out of phase'. But I don't really hold with defensive gambits. I prefer to attack. Good business, I stress, is only done when one is not tied to a rigid schedule. As for golf — well, every company chairman knows that the golf course is a splendid launching pad for lucrative deals. Golf and money have always had a close association. Historians maintain that the game was invented by Scottish

traders to catch Dutch businessmen off guard and win profitable orders. The Americans and more recently the Japanese have made the same discovery. A morning on the golf course is often more lucrative than a week in the office — and a lot more pleasant.

There are financial editors who hire morning coats and grey toppers from Moss Bros and spend the day at Ascot because, they claim, it is the best place to collect information. Others shoot grouse, and one or two claim that their greatest triumphs originated at Lords. I have always fared rather well on the Centre Court at Wimbledon. But the seasons are too short; for me there is nothing to beat a golf course. Some of the biggest mergers of the past decade have begun with a casual remark on the seventeenth fairway. Merchant bankers and stockbrokers have acquired some of their best clients while blasting out of a bunker. Industrialists have celebrated some of their most profitable deals over a drink at the clubhouse. And of course many people have landed well-paid jobs through making the right contacts. In the office, businessmen are harassed, overcautious, and discouragingly well protected. On the golf course they are relaxed, approachable and receptive. If they are doing well they also tend to be delightfully indiscreet. They boast about their successes, talk about others in the pipeline, and gossip about rivals.

I wish you could have been with me in Bermuda when I met Fred. He is an oil millionaire from Oklahoma (honest) and plays golf with the same enthusiasm he devotes to making money. We got on splendidly. Over drinks, after a game which I had the good sense to lose, he offered to set me up in business. There was this friend in Texas, you see, who had made billions out of the black stuff and was longing to start a newspaper. All he needed was an editor who was eager to make a fortune. I told him the fortune sounded fine, but I wasn't sure about living in New York. Fred looked hurt, but suggested we should keep in touch. There were plenty of other millionaires, it seemed, who couldn't wait to share their money with the right business partner. I might, just might, be persuaded to part with Fred's address. Providing, of course, that you know how to be a convincing loser.

I suppose that there *are* heartless chairmen who will demand

proof that time on the golf course actually produces business. If you haven't got it try showing him the formula developed by the late Dr. Loyd Buley of the International Civil Aviation Organisation:—

$$RP = \frac{T}{2} + (Z - 4) = CD = CA$$

The RP stands for rest periods, and you needn't bother with the other stuff. The formula proves conclusively that a couple of days on the golf course are absolutely *vital*. Airlines and hotels are most helpful about this and there is no shortage of restful courses around the world. It might be as well, though, not to bring your bag of clubs into the office on the day of departure. Jealousy is a terrible thing and some colleagues might choose to misunderstand.

The chairman himself will probably make use of another indispensable device: the overseas subsidiary. You will, no doubt, have noticed how the Old Man tends to disappear when the rigours of our winter make life difficult in Britain. The subsidiary in Australia, or South Africa, or the West Indies suddenly requires a goodwill visit — to maintain team spirit. Try to do the same, if you can. The local people like to feel that head office cares, and the taxman will readily agree that such visits are essential for the proper conduct of your business. It's called keeping in touch and it has the considerable merit that you don't have to produce anything tangible at the end.

Your local expenses, moreover, can generally be paid by the subsidiary without any trouble from tax authorities.

If you haven't got a subsidiary, the next best thing is to go out there with the avowed intention of exploring the possibility of starting one. Again it should not be necessary to *do* anything; the word research is good for at least a fortnight's stay. Another ploy is to get yourself invited, through contacts established on earlier visits, to conferences sponsored by government bodies or trade associations. Someone has to show the flag; it might as well be you. If you can arrange for the organisers to ask that you should make a speech, so much the better. It should leave you ample time to enjoy the sunshine.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONFERENCE MAN

CONFERENCES are a big business — so much so that nobody knows how big it really is. They range from the think-tank type of seminar, attended by fifteen or twenty members, to the 6–7,000-delegate event. When the American Bar Association held its conference in London a few years ago more than 16,000 people — delegates, their families, and officials — crossed the Atlantic.

The best documented are those of international associations, more than 6,000 of them, all with an annual jamboree. This is very much a European phenomenon, but other areas, including Asia and Africa, are rapidly increasing their participation. Then there are the conferences held by smaller and more local bodies such as national and regional associations. It is in this sector that the United States is predominant, holding more than 50,000 local association meetings every year. Corporate business meetings are hard to quantify, because there is no way of knowing how many take place, but a modest assessment from the U.S. puts the annual total there at about 400,000. Forecasts of the growth rates in all sections indicate a probable annual increase of ten to fifteen per cent, with the interesting reflection that they will grow in size as well.

British Airways, which has a special Conference and Advisory Bureau, produces a regular calendar of these events. It is a fascinating list, ranging from the World Conference of Master Tailors in London to the German Weapons Fair in Stuttgart, and the World Congress of the European Union of Public Accountants in Barcelona. Every sort of organised activity produces its annual conference — and some hold several a year.

There is an International Congress of Business Women, of Jehovah's Witnesses, and of European Landscape Architects. Seed crushers, dredgers, butchers, all feel the need for togetherness; The World Ploughing Association deliberates on world ploughing, and the International Congress of Thunder Protection on the wrath of Thor. There is even a Conference of Conference Organisers. And the Iron Curtain countries are no less enthusiastic. When the Black Sea turns warm and the rich fields of southern Russia are filled with the best fruits and vegetables in the land, Moscow free-loaders pack up their wives and girl friends and head off to conferences, seminars and wholesale fairs called by their ministries or trade societies. 'As soon as the southern sea is warmed up to a necessary temperature, a departmental migration starts to the resort cities,' *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, the newspaper for young Communists, reported not long ago. 'There is a real battle going on for hotel rooms in Sochi,' a local correspondent said. 'By some thinking, it is time to make a special beach there for men on business missions.' The missions are varied and sometimes mysterious. A Krasnodar social organisation, for example, held a ten-day seminar at Sochi that cost 4,000 roubles although the programme of the seminar itself could not be discovered. Another conference, held by the trade inspection board of the Russian Republic, spent two wonderful weeks talking about the quality of consumer goods.

Cynics have offered various definitions of conferences, and some are worth repeating:

> Conferences are primarily a means of enabling people with some common interest to present a united front against the outside world.
>
> A conference is an arrangement, financed by the Government, by which persons are enabled to take their holidays in the company of other persons whom they see every day of the year.
>
> A conference is a gathering of important people who singly can do nothing, but together can decide that nothing can be done.
>
> A conference is an institution for getting people together and telling them what they believe and why they believe it,

while all around them they have the feeling that all other people who matter believe it too.

There is an element of truth in all of these descriptions. Conferences are a natural extension of committee meetings. They make people feel at home, real, important. A week at a conference is like a week on an ocean liner or a week in hospital. It is life suspended from the rules of normal existence. Conferences make everyone happy, keep people in jobs, enliven the boring round, create industrial harmony, and reassure the participant that he is not the only one ploughing a furrow in fertilisers, cybernetics or whatever.

Some, of course, are simply an excuse for a binge — and the only end-product a few pretentious resolutions. But more of that later; the main purpose of this chapter is to examine the conference boom and offer a few comments which, I hope, will be helpful to the business traveller.

One of the more worthwhile objectives of a good conference is to allow professionals from different cities — and indeed different countries — to exchange ideas and to discuss interesting new developments. This is particularly true of medical conferences and other scientific meetings. In the business world, the object is often to build some sort of team spirit among employees. The last decade has seen an extraordinary increase in takeover bids and mergers. They may have been good in terms of competitiveness and profit, but the human element has tended to be largely ignored. It's not easy for a big corporation, with interests in half a dozen fields and two or three hundred thousand employees, to maintain a family feeling. In a smaller firm there is a sense of personal involvement, of pride in the firm's achievement. In the larger company one tends to feel more like a 'unit'. The advent of multi-national corporations has made this even more of a problem. An annual conference is, at least, a means of bringing key people together in one place.

In a vast country like the United States the value of conventions has been recognised for many years. 'Americans', said a recent report of the International Association of Convention Bureaux, 'must love to congregate more than any other people in the history of the world. Virtually any excuse to collect

together for a common purpose will be accepted eagerly.' The report added that for forty years every American city has been seeking convention business because a successful convention industry can be worth more in advertising to a community than anything else that exists.

Television coverage of that uniquely American event, the party convention, has given many outsiders the impression that all American conventions are full of people in straw hats and extravagant costumes, carrying balloons and waving huge banners. Some are indeed like that, but many others are essentially serious, well-planned and productive affairs. Perhaps the main thing which distinguishes them is sheer size. The U.S. has more than fifty major convention halls and over 700 convention hotels, some of which can accommodate 3,500 or more delegates at a time, providing everything from bedrooms to large and small suites. Cities like Los Angeles have jumbo-size convention complexes, catering for the American urge to have everything under one roof. Chicago has accommodated a convention for 30,000 delegates in its McCormick Place convention centre, and meetings of 10,000 to 15,000 are commonplace. Have you ever seen 10,000 people at one conference? I have, and it's a terrifying sight. Ten thousand individuals pushed this way and that, lost in huge assembly halls, the president and other key executives far away on a raised platform, the banquets dreadfully formal and inhibiting. To me, such mammoth occasions seem to defeat the whole purpose of conventions. Smaller meetings are infinitely more valuable, and I suggest you always make a point of finding out just how many other executives have been invited. Conventions *can* be fun, especially with the company footing the bill, but if the numbers are too large they can also be immensely frustrating. A word of warning, too, about booking into one of these vast convention hotels. Not only is the service likely to be poor, but hospitality suites tend to swing far into the night. Fine for those who have been invited (if you like that kind of thing) but very irritating if you have booked into the place on your own and are trying to get some sleep after a long flight or a busy day. It has happened to me several times, notably in Washington and San Francisco, and I always make a point, these days, of checking in advance whether my planned stay is likely to

coincide with a big convention. If it is, I book in elsewhere.

In recent years Americans have got into the habit of holding their conferences abroad from time to time. There are several reasons for this, including the growing spread of American business interests throughout Europe and the rest of the world since the end of the last war. It can now be cheaper to take American headquarters staff to, say, London and there to meet the 'foreign team' than it could be to call all the men in the field back to America. Another factor is the growing belief that conferences should be held in attractive centres. This means that not only should the country be accessible and the conference and accommodation facilities be good, but that the city should have some cultural and entertainment value for delegates in their spare time. Some conference organisers deliberately try to keep them away from any possible distraction; they fly their executives into convention centres like that at Chicago's O'Hare airport, tie them down for three days and nights, and send them on their way again without ever seeing the town. But others prefer somewhere where delegates can relax afterwards.

Foreign conferences have other advantages. By assembling delegates in a foreign language destination, for example, the company creates a 'family' atmosphere which is difficult to do on home ground. A group of Americans — or, for that matter, Englishmen — in Monaco or Paris feel a community spirit which may well enliven their off-duty hours but which also contributes considerably to their work sessions. And, of course, foreign trips tend to appeal much more to the wives.

Hawaii and the Caribbean are popular venues, but Europe certainly gets its share. Countries like Holland and Germany have some of the finest facilities to be found anywhere. In Hamburg, a splendid new conference centre has been opened in the city's equivalent of Hyde Park. Like American centres it offers everything under one roof: a main hall which can seat over 3,000 guests, sixteen smaller conference rooms, restaurants, a 1,000-bed hotel, and an underground garage for 1,100 cars. All conference rooms are fitted with the latest technical facilities including modern studio equipment, large size projectors for film and TV shows and the most modern layout for simultaneous interpreting. Paris, too, has built a 4,200 seater centre,

and in 1977 Berlin joins the battle for international congress business with a 5,000 capacity *Kongress-Zentrum*.

Britain is not as well provided with big conference centres as it perhaps ought to be, but there is a wide choice of venues. Seaside towns like Brighton and Bournemouth make strenuous efforts to attract conference business and most major provincial cities claim to have adequate facilities. In London, one of the more interesting ventures is the Heathrow Hotel. Built on the airport itself, it is clearly meant to emulate Chicago. The Heathrow has 700 sound-proofed, air-conditioned bedrooms and suites and 'a conference theatre unlike any other in Britain'. Its refinements include closed-circuit TV with bedroom links, and an audio-visual system with wide-screen projection and, at each seat, lots of useful gadgets. Each delegate has a TV console, a voting button, a microphone, an electronic calculator and simultaneous translation earphones. The Heathrow also offers what it describes — in a very British sort of way — as a course of treatment between working sessions. Guests can 'limber up in our gymnasiums, let their cares float away in our heated indoor pool, bring the colour back to their cheeks in our solarium, and relax in our sauna and massage rooms.'

It is easy to see, of course, why hotel owners want to keep guests away from rival attractions. Conference delegates spend up to five times as much as average tourists, and profits from banquets, lunches, cabarets and cocktail parties far exceed the income from the hire of the conference hall itself. Many companies use conferences as a sales platform and spend huge amounts creating an image which will ensure a bright future. In this respect the catering and entertainment can be critical.

Like its Chicago counterpart, the Heathrow claims that airport hotels save time, energy, and money. But if that is the objective there is an even better way of ensuring a captive audience: you hire a cruise ship. Consider what the organiser gets for his outlay: a sea trip that might well include several ports of call; facilities which, in a vessel like the QE2, include a fully equipped theatre with every conceivable conference aid, smaller meeting rooms, ship-to-shore communications, secretaries, dictating machines, and portable typewriters; and a wide range of lounges and bars, floor shows, nightclubs, cinemas, swimming pools, saunas and turkish baths. There is

also ample scope for hospitality suites, with the added advantage of alcohol at duty-free prices.

Conferences in the air have also been used a few times as a successful gimmick for events such as a product launching or company sales conference. One charters an aircraft for the day, packs it full of salesmen, dealers or press, gives them the hard sell and plenty of champagne during the morning flight en route to somewhere exotic for lunch, three or four hours on the ground, then the hard sell and some more hard liquor during the late afternoon or evening flight home.

Airlines are always willing to discuss this kind of charter, but their interest in the conference business naturally goes much wider. Delegates represent a lot of potential fare-paying passengers. Big operators like British Airways also have a share stake in hotels throughout the world and offer complete package deals. They advise on the selection of venue, flight and travel arrangements, off-season savings, group discounts and many other problems.

As competition grows, the search for off-beat settings will no doubt intensify. There certainly seems no reason to doubt that conference business will continue to expand. But gimmicks are not enough in the long run: conferences have to have a worthwhile purpose. There are too many functions run by overenthusiastic amateurs, whose sole ambition seems to be to get through as much booze as possible in the shortest period of time. Many executives I know no longer attend this kind of binge because it is so obviously a waste of time. If their companies feel they ought to be represented, to avoid giving offence to some powerful member of the organising committee, they send a more or less full-time conference attender — a man with a tough liver and unlimited patience whose job it is to take the heat off people who would normally go. He won't learn anything, but he will at least know how to hold his liquor and he will have enough experience of conferences to be aware of the various pitfalls. It is, alas, more than can be said for many other delegates — including, more often than not, the people at the very top.

Most men become different people when they ascend a platform: the chap who talks so much down-to-earth common sense

in the pub tends to be a pompous bore when he makes a speech. Fear, uncertainty, the desire to please a partisan audience — these are just a few of the forces which produce that modern phenomenon: Conference Man. Conference Man calls on governments to build New Tomorrows, settles wars with a few well-chosen words, and has an easy answer to every problem. Conference Man tells people what they want to hear, not what they ought to hear.

Watch the experienced performer in action, and you'll see what I mean. You may have had a drink with him beforehand, and discussed the state of your firm's order book and the foolishness of economists. His language then was blunt and direct. Up there on the platform, though, he is another person. He no longer tries to say what he thinks, but concentrates on putting across the message everyone expects. He knows exactly what is wrong with the Government, industry and the world, and he knows what must be done to put things right. We must, he will say, get the country moving again. End frustration. Meet the challenge of the seventies.

Don't get me wrong. It may be exactly right for the occasion. There is safety in platitudes. No one is likely to take exception to noble sentiments; originality may confuse and offend your audience. You are always safe with phrases like this:

> We're dealing with human beings, not statistics;
> The unions are doing to us what Hitler couldn't do;
> Let us press forward, while there is yet time;
> I understand there will be champagne in the ante-room.

At international conferences, the usual form is to sing the praises of freedom, brotherhood and friendship. Take this splendid remark made by Stalin (of all people) in 1952: 'The peaceful co-existence of capitalism and communism is fully possible given the mutual desire to co-operate, readiness to perform obligations which have been assumed, observance of the principle of equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states.' What could be nicer? Well, perhaps this sentence or two from the communique put out at the end of the conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers held in London later that year. The conference agreed that:

> Internal economic policies designed to curb inflation and rises in the cost of living should be steadily followed. Sound economic development should be encouraged with the object of increasing productive strength and competitive power, providing employment, and raising the standards of life.

Some businessmen I know have managed to sail through countless conferences, at home and abroad, by using a simple recipe. Take half a dozen quotes from long-forgotten political speeches, add a few generalisations, stir in a few jokes and flattering comments about the host and audience, and serve in a confident manner. If you are addressing employees from your own company, congratulate everyone on their achievements, thank the wives for their support, mention the importance of profit, and urge them to try harder still.

It works well enough, but there are times when it won't do. You may, for example, be asked to speak at a high-level seminar of fellow executives on some specific topic. The organisers may also ask you to produce a paper. If you get up and waffle you will, inevitably, be regarded as someone who has nothing worthwhile to contribute. The audience will be appalled by your lack of depth. Your reputation (and the reputation of your company) will suffer and you certainly won't be asked to speak again.

This is more obviously true of medical conferences and other professional gatherings, and indeed this kind of function tends to be serious both in purpose and execution. I once found myself at a convention of the Modern Language Association in New York. Almost all the 10,000 delegates were Ph.D.'s and the papers had daunting titles like *The Semantic Features of the Machismo Ethic in English* and *The Cunning Spontaneities of Romanticism.* But business conferences, too, frequently have a more ambitious aim and any speaker who tries to make do with empty phrases will end up feeling foolish. A few years ago I was asked to speak, within a few months, at conferences in Tokyo and Toronto on the subject of economic growth. I took considerable trouble with both speeches, and I was glad I did so. The conferences were attended by intelligent people with a keen interest in the subject, and strong views of their own. To have insulted their intelligence would have been

a bad mistake, and would certainly have turned the whole thing into a nightmare. I don't claim that my contributions were particularly profound, but they were well received and, because of this, I enjoyed my trips.

The main lesson I have learned from these occasions is that it pays to stick to the topics one knows best. It may seem obvious, but you'd be surprised how many people chance their luck in areas they know no better than the next man. You are much more likely to impress an audience if you specialise. Your experience and knowledge of the subject will come through, and you will be able to challenge conventional thinking without making people embarrassed or angry.

To do this, of course, you should try to get as much information as possible about the aims and framework of the conference, and about the kind of people who are expected to attend. Insist on certain details,no matter how hard-pressed the organiser may be. There is a world of difference between addressing fifty-people and five hundred, or between an audience of fellow experts and one of laymen. What is the rest of the programme, and how do you relate to it? Where do you come on, and how much time will you have? Precisely what does the programme committee hope to accomplish? Will there be questions afterwards? Will your speech be translated into other languages? Will it be released to the press? Given this kind of briefing, it isn't too difficult to prepare the *right* sort of speech.

The pitfalls are legion. Programme committees have a penchant for thinking up smart, but misleading, titles. Or they will be deliberately vague because no one has ever actually decided what the conference is *about*. Some years ago I toured a number of American cities on behalf of one of the country's biggest stock-broking firms. My brief was to talk about Europe's financial and economic problems. In St. Louis, Chicago, and San Francisco the audience was small, businesslike, obviously well-informed, and attentive. When I got to Los Angeles, my sponsors urged me to make exactly the same speech. But when I arrived at the venue — the ballroom of the huge Century Plaza Hotel — my heart sank. Five or six hundred smartly dressed people, businessmen and their wives, were drinking heavily and watching a group of dancers who had been specially flown over from Hawaii for the evening. A brief chat

with two or three of them quickly confirmed my suspicion that no one gave a fig for the financial problems of Europe; they were there to have a good time. I found the Organising Secretary and remonstrated. 'Oh,' he said, 'we knew all that. But you go ahead as planned. We're paying the bill — *and it mustn't be all enjoyment.*' I went into the foyer, sat down in a comfortable chair, and considered my position. I obviously couldn't walk out. But I also knew it would be disastrous if I delivered the speech I had in my pocket.

Fortunately, Mr. Orben came to the rescue. Orben is a clever chap in New York, with a talent for composing topical one-line jokes. He produces a comedy guide which goes out regularly to subscribers all over the country. Thousands of businessmen work them into their speeches — without, of course, acknowledging the source. It is a lucrative game, and one which has saved many shaky reputations. A friend had given me one of Mr. Orben's despatches a few days earlier, and I hastily worked a dozen or so of the best gags into my script. Half of them, I recall, were about General de Gaulle, then highly unpopular because of his attacks on the dollar. Two or three were about the poor old pound. I was tempted to include some about California, but decided against it because Americans do not, as a rule, like to hear foreigners joking about their habits and institutions. Like the British, they prefer to laugh at others rather than at themselves.

Thus armed, I mounted the rostrum. The British Consul had been persuaded to introduce me (I was then Financial Editor of *The Guardian*) and was fulsome in my praise. We had never met before, and his remarks quickly made it apparent that he knew nothing whatever about me. In other circumstances I might have been flattered — but given this audience, and the nature of my speech, it merely served to raise expectations which I knew I wouldn't be able to fulfil. Their faces fell as he announced the title of my speech. I struggled on, feeling miserable, until I came to my first joke. It brought the house down. Bolder now, I talked a bit more about Europe and then told the next one. And so on. The evening was saved.

Ever since then I have taken good care to ask searching questions before undertaking to speak anywhere. And I have not hesitated to change my speech to suit the mood of the occasion.

A word, though, about jokes. Don't place your faith in joke books, because at least some of your audience will have read them too. Don't pile one on top of another, and never explain a joke. Don't offend your hosts: no one in his right mind would tell a joke in Nairobi about cannibals, no matter how funny. (Some countries, inevitably, are more sensitive than others. The Australians, for example, resent English jokes about their beer, their suburbs, their cricket and the Sydney Opera House. And they reserve the exclusive right to use bad language: when an Aussie calls you a Pommie Bastard it's a term of affection, but when you call him an Aussie Bastard it's an insult. They love people like David Frost who said that 'Australian politicians are direct and witty; Australian people generous; the news media equivalent to any in the world; and the weather fabulous'.)

Above all, try to avoid dirty jokes. I know it isn't always easy, because some audiences love them. When the platitudes are done, even statesmen are wont to sip brandy, nudge each other, and tell the one about the actress and the bishop. I have no doubt it was so at Yalta, Potsdam, and Vienna. And I suspect that the fellows sitting round the conference table in Brussels, or in the United Nations headquarters, delight each other with ribald tales after posing, with solemn statesmanlike mien, for the benefit of innocent photographers. I realise, whenever I face a sated after-dinner audience, that they *expect* to hear another dreary recital of platitudes, and *long* for some new spicy jokes. You sense this as you get up to speak, you know that they will feel let down, and you wonder whether you should even bother to quote Leacock or mention the balance of payments. And, of course, sometimes you weaken. I have never told a really dirty joke (honest) but there's an excruciatingly silly story I slip in, occasionally, when I sense that I am losing a late night audience of businessmen. It's to do with the confusion some people feel when confronted by pompous forms, and it stars a pretty young girl who applied for a job with a London engineering firm. She dutifully supplied all the various statistics she was asked for: age, height, religion, colour of eyes and so on. When she came to sex she paused and put: 'Once, in Scunthorpe'. Groan if you like, but it usually gets a laugh.

A year or two ago, you may recall, there was an awful row, in a town whose name I forget, because the Mayoress told a joke which actually included the dreaded four letter word at a gathering of several hundred businessmen. It was a very funny tale about two pilots who take a couple of girls up in a plane — but no, you wouldn't want to hear this kind of filth. The Mayoress was a nice little old lady, with grey hair and an imposing chain of office, and she was the only woman at the do. Once they had managed to get over their surprise, the businessmen delightedly competed in telling the most indescribably daring stories. The Bishop, guardian of the town's morals, looked suitably appalled — and, when that proved inadequate, walked out.

This sort of thing happens more often than we like to admit. The brandy releases inhibitions, and the cigar smoke produces an atmosphere of *camaraderie* in which grown men revert to their schooldays and, amid much giggling, impress each other with their fund of ribaldry. They would be angry if anyone had the bad taste to tell one of these jokes over a business deal, but the evening is supposed to be different. Women are usually embarrassed by these free-for-alls (and understandably so) and top executives tend to be filled with remorse when they wake up the next morning. Some carefully built reputations have taken a dive after the dangerous hour of eight.

Even clean jokes, it should be stressed, are not evidence of a sense of humour. And joke telling should certainly not be confused with wit — which is, essentially, skill in combining ideas with a pointed verbal affect. Churchill was a witty speaker, and you still won't go far wrong, anywhere in the world, if you quote some of his better efforts. Leacock, Twain and Shaw are all excellent sources; you will find their *bons mots* in every good dictionary of quotations. Care should, however, be taken not to drag them in regardless of context. Quoting others is justified only if it's relevant to your basic theme — if it helps to underline some important point. And if you can do without quotes, do so. Originality is better every time.

Humour is, basically, the ability to recognise the ludicrous, the comical and the absurd aspects of human life and situations, and to express them in such a way that others will see them. Let things speak for themselves. There is enormous charm, and value, in Dylan Thomas's definition of an alcoholic ăs 'someone

you don't like who drinks as much as you do'. And one can have a lot of fun, at a business conference, with today's more fanciful economic jargon. Exaggerate, understate, surprise, poke fun at yourself, adapt gags, expose pomposity, play with words, be irreverent — but try, as far as possible, to draw your humour from the comedy of your surroundings. There are obviously times, though, when it's wise to keep a straight face. The American Bankers Association, for example, likes to include an Annual Prayer Breakfast in its convention programme — accompanied by the 'Swigbies' chorus of South Western bankers with their own special music'. The purpose, according to A.B.A. Treasurer Joe H. Davis, is to 'turn to a higher source of power for strength and guidance in carrying out our arduous duties and responsibilities'. Friends who have attended these strength-giving sessions claim they are wildly funny. But beware — bankers are not renowned for their sense of humour.

Dale Carnegie, author of one of the best books on the art of public speaking, says that 'the gaining of self-confidence and courage, and the ability to think calmly and clearly while talking to a group, is not one tenth as difficult as most people imagine'. Most of the great orators in history, he points out, were nervous when they first faced an audience. Lloyd George was 'in a state of misery . . . my tongue clung to the roof of my mouth; and at first I could hardly get out a word'. Disraeli confessed that he would rather have led a cavalry charge than to have to face the House of Commons; his opening speech there was a ghastly failure.

There is no reason why a good doctor, engineer, accountant, or textile manufacturer should also be a good speaker. It takes training and practise to do well. Many people lie awake half the night, in a strange bed somewhere in a strange town, terrified of the 'ordeal' which awaits them the next day. They fervently wish they had stayed at home. When it's time to speak they apologise for their inadequacy, stumble through sentences in which they have no confidence, forget the punch-line of their jokes, and generally have a thoroughly miserable time.

But that could never happen to *you*, could it?

What *could* happen is that, on top of everything else, you might be asked to deliver your speech in a foreign language.

Don't do it — unless you speak it well. A single mispronunciation may have your audience in fits of laughter, ruining a good, serious dissertation. Or they may be so fascinated by your stumbling attempts to cope with unfamiliar words that they pay no attention to the actual content. In France, you will probably cause offence. The French are extraordinarily proud of their language, and they have little patience with foreigners who do not speak it well.

Emperor Charles V, who claimed to have a language for every occasion, said he spoke 'Spanish to God, Italian to women, French to men, and German to my horse'. It is not recorded in what language they replied. The idea, though, makes sense. It's impossible, for example, to discuss cricket in anything but English. And I think you will agree with the verdict of a young girl from Streatham who was asked by the press what she thought of President Pompidou's argument that French, not English, should be the language of Europe. 'For a girl,' she declares, 'anything would be better than the normal English "come on, luv, give us a kiss".'

France's efforts have, so far, met with only limited success. French is the language of international diplomacy, and it is used extensively at the Common Market headquarters in Brussels. But this is not an issue which can be settled by politicians: the practical arguments are bound, in the long run, to defeat the sentimental one. More than 309 million people speak English as their mother tongue, against 73 million who started off with French. And English is the language of business because America is, without doubt, the most powerful commercial influence in the West. Americans are poor liguists, and if you want to do business with them you have to talk their language. Many people do. Business jargon, in particular, has become thoroughly anglicised — or perhaps more accurately, Americanised. Words like manager, boss, and marketing are in common use. Even in Belgium, centre of the Common Market, English has become more popular as a compromise between French and Flemish. And people — especially businessmen — are so keen to demonstrate their prowess that they refuse to let you try *their* language. They interrupt the moment you start to speak and, with a triumphant smile, launch into fluent English. This trend is likely to continue, but it won't all

be one way. As people become more outward looking, many more individuals will pick up at least a basic knowledge of another language. Tourism and greater interchange of labour will see to that. So will the move towards multi-national business corporations. The other language may be French, but it's just as likely to be Italian, or German, or Spanish. In the process we shall adapt a larger number of foreign words for daily use at home. French has long been the language of cooking; every British housewife knows at least a few French words. The Italians have given us *dolce vita*, *pizza*, and *espresso*. The Germans — well, the Germans have given us *blitz* and *schadenfreude*.

Television is likely to accelerate the pace. Rolf Harris finds it quite easy to do spectaculars for both English and German television, in which he addresses his audience in an odd mixture of both languages, and *Monty Python's Flying Circus* has been getting rave reviews in Bonn and Hamburg. This may well set the pattern for the future: thirty years from now Europe may have a new language — based on English-American but taking in all kinds of appealing French, German and Italian phrases — which is generally understood and accepted. If the prospect bothers you, remember that no one will ever stop you learning just French, or German, or Italian.

International conferences, fortunately, are usually equipped with good translation facilities. I generally try to write down a few opening sentences in the host country's language, just to show goodwill, before switching into English. I get by, in everyday life, with reasonable French and Italian, but I would never dream of using either on the platform. German is different, because I was born in Germany and still speak the language well.

Even with translation, you may still encounter a few surprises. The translator sometimes mistakes your meaning, and you will find the audience wreathed in smiles when you expect them to look serious. In Japan, I found that the translation took twice as long because it is customary to explain what the speaker means. All this, of course, is infinitely better than making a fool of yourself — or unnecessarily restricting your scope because of your limited knowledge of another's vocabulary.

I learned my first words of English at the age of twelve, at a school in Hanover. My teacher — a professor who had lived in Britain for many years — impressed us by making no mention of grammar in the first few weeks. He taught us English songs, and we learned them with enthusiasm because it meant we could show off at home. He also produced an ancient gramophone and played one particular disc over and over again. It had an Englishman — not a German teacher speaking English with a German accent — reciting a very short piece of verse:

All that you do
Do with your might
Things done by half
Are never done right.

Although we didn't know it at the time, these four lines contained all the words which a German finds hard to pronounce. All. That. With. Half. Right. He made us repeat them, day after day, until he felt we had the pronunciation exactly right. Teaching methods today are, of course, much more sophisticated, but it is still a useful little thing to remember. And it isn't such a bad motto for an ambitious businessman either.

Some people try to make do with phrase-books or dictionaries, and I suppose they are better than nothing at all. Even a single word will sometimes do in an emergency. (My own favourite is an Australian booklet which explains phrases like raw prawn, chundering, one-eyed trouser snake, and pointing the bone at a cobber. It wouldn't do, even in Australia, to mistake an insult for a compliment, and vice versa.) But phrasebooks are an unreliable travel companion and, of course, for anyone conducting a business conversation — let alone a speech — they are virtually useless.

Others attempt to learn foreign languages through courses on TV. The BBC has been running them for years (supplying books and LP's along with the programmes) and claims that they attract a large number of regular viewers. I am not surprised, if one of the series I watched is typical. It was called *Si Dice Cosi*, and it featured two beautiful and curvey ladies, Miss Yole Marinelli and Miss Bianca Maria Corbella. Yole is perhaps the best argument there is for learning Italian, but the

lessons didn't get me very far. They seemed to consist mainly of Yole and Bianca swirling their hips around and asking things like:

Is this skirt long?
Is this skirt short?
Who will repair the plug on my Hoover?
Has the light bulb gone out?
Do you like this lampshade?

The demonstrations were very fetching, but one couldn't help wondering who it was all aimed at. English girls going into service in Naples?

For me the best way to learn a language is still to live abroad for a year or two, ideally among people who don't speak a word of your own. Necessity is a good teacher. It's maddening to miss out on an interesting conversation because you can't understand the language, and even more maddening to lose a potentially profitable deal because you can't communicate your enthusiasm.

Companies with offices or subsidiaries abroad tend to make a point of sending promising your executives to two or three branches, for a year at a time, with instructions to learn the language and local customs. It's a sensible practice, not only because knowledge of the local language makes it easier to establish and maintain contact, but also because it's useful to know how others think. Americans, in particular, have become very much aware that other people have their own methods and traditions, and that it pays to get to know them.

Some firms, too, send key executives on short language courses in the country concerned. These take various forms, but let me give one example. The Production Engineering Association invited nine executives at £230 a time, to spend a week in Frankfurt, speaking nothing but German from the moment they set foot in the Lufthansa plane at London airport. Classes went on from 9.00 a.m. until 10.00 p.m., with short breaks for lunch and dinner. There were visits to local factories, lectures from a member of the German Stock Exchange who talked about taxation, and debates on German customs. The course was aimed at people who already had a knowledge of German

and was intended to increase their spoken and written German to a level where they could conduct technical and business dealings fluently and with confidence. The organisers readily agreed that the course was hard work — but, they added, 'with everything being conducted in German, in Germany, it is amazing what an advance the delegates make.'

An enterprising group of Eurocrats in Brussels tried another way. They hired a coach and, with their teacher, made a five-day 'speaking tour' of southern England. The class of eighteen ranged from twenty-four-year-olds to sixty-year-olds, from clerks to top civil servants in the E.E.C. administration, from secretaries to Euratom patent experts, and consisted of Germans, Italians, Frenchmen and Belgians. All were beginners in learning English, having attended only a few classes. When the Commission heard that they had pooled their own resources for the trip it agreed to donate the coach — a vintage Commission vehicle — and to pay for petrol and bus expenses, including the driver. The trip combined sightseeing with intensive practise in using English. English-only was the rule until 11.00 p.m. Fines were levied on defaulters. On the coach, between towns, English songs were taught and sung — one girl had brought her guitar — and the teacher ran a modified class, explaining the quirks in the English language encountered each day and constantly keeping a group discussion going in English. Off the coach, the class had to cope with guided tours, shopping, and mixing with the local inhabitants.

For those who prefer to do their studying at home the Institute of Directors, among others, runs special foreign language courses for businessmen. First introduced in 1963, they are designed to produce really effective results in just three or four weeks. The Institute concedes that no one can learn a language in three weeks, but claims that the course provides 'a sound conversational grounding which gives a basic understanding of the language as used in business and social situations'.

The languages taught are French, German, Spanish, and Italian, and there is a choice of morning and afternoon sessions, so that one can deal with normal business affairs during the rest of the day, if necessary. The cost, at the time of writing, ranged from £69 for members and £81 for non-members, covering the

standard three-week conversational course, to £92 for members and £108 for non-members for the extended four-week course.

Berlitz, one of the world's best-known language schools, offers a variety of courses, including one which executives can take on company premises. They are given to a single student, or to a group of up to eight people, and can be done in company time or outside. There is also a Berlitz 'field service', under which a teacher is made available for eight hours per day on a weekly basis for single students or groups. A hotel may hire him as a resident instructor, teaching its staff, or he may give classes to passengers on board a ship.

Berlitz says it has 'passed out of the language laboratory era into the new portable world of cassettes'. It's even got a splendid jargon phrase for the new world: 'Multi-Media'. In plain English, it means a combination of teacher, textbook, tapes and illustration charts and one of its chief merits is that you can do your laboratory work whenever and wherever you wish.

Perhaps the most interesting development, however, is the so-called Total Immersion course. It calls for complete concentration; there is none of this business of taking half the day off for making money. The idea is 'saturation instruction which will give the student a basic command of a new language in from two to six weeks'. He is required to spend ten hours a day in school, and the instructor will stay with him at lunchtime, too. 'Lunching with a native speaker', explains the brochure, 'gives the student an insight into the customs and habits of the people. For example, do the Germans still consider it horrific to cut potatoes with a knife? Do the Japanese still remain absolutely silent while they eat? Minor points but so important to the confidence of a visiting businessman.' Total immersion is understandably popular with people in a hurry and a ten-hour day is certainly no picnic. But, as Berlitz is quick to point out, you still don't get the full benefit if you stay in Britain: their advice is to go to one of their Total Immersion centres abroad.

The question of customs and habits has, I confess, always struck me as a side issue. Is it really so vital to know how Germans treat their potatoes? Surely they recognise that, as a Briton, you are entitled to follow your own custom? And why *should* one remain silent while the Japanese eat? Excessive

eagerness to copy other people's habits can cause some awkward situations — if only because *their* language teachers have taught them to copy *yours*. In Japan, for example, I went to see the president of one of the biggest banks. Trying to be polite, I bowed — while *he* stretched out his hand. There was an embarrassed pause, and then we tried again. This time he bowed, and *I* stretched out my hand.

And yet, etiquette obviously means a good deal to many people. Foreign visitors to Britain are expected to know that, if they attend a formal dinner, they must resist the urge to smoke before the chairman has proposed the loyal toast. They are even expected to understand the elaborate ritual of passing the loving cup. Why should they expect any less from us?

Business correspondence is one of the areas where ignorance of local customs can easily give offence. In some countries — Italy is an example — people still prefer the flowery style of letter writing, including elaborate salutations, which was common in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. We may no longer declare ourselves to be 'your humble and obedient servant', but they still like such gentle touches. The brisk, businesslike type of letter preferred by the British and American executives may strike them as unnecessarily curt and ungracious.

As with language, growing contact with people will, no doubt, lead to a gradual merging of customs and habits. You may prefer to wait for that to happen. Most business deals depend more on quality of product, price and the right delivery date than on good manners and the ability to converse in French, German, or Italian. But you will unquestionably miss a lot of fun — and there *are* occasions when a little polish can make all the difference. There are also some practical considerations, particularly for the man on a tight schedule. In Spain and many other Latin countries, for example, it is customary to take two or three hours rest in the mid-afternoon. Most establishments are shut during *siesta*, so there's no point in trying to arrange any business appointments. Many countries, too, have a large number of religious holidays and, unless you are familiar with them or have at least taken the trouble to check beforehand, you may find yourself losing valuable time.

In Islamic countries *Ramadan*, the thirty-day fast period,

should be taken into account. This is the most observed religious holiday, when Moslems fast each day, refraining from food and drink between dawn and dark. The day is supposed to be spent in prayer and meditation, but many people are too limp to do more than sleep. Friday is the Islamic holy day, when no business is done and in countries with a mixed population of Moslems, Christians and Jews you may find yourself limited to four working days.

The same thing may happen nearer home. You've probably been caught yourself on Liberation Day (April 4th) in Hungary, or St. Paul's Shipwreck Day (February 10th) in Malta or Okhi Day (October 28th) in Greece, the anniversary of the day in 1940 when the Greeks said No, or words to that effect, to an Italian ultimatum. In Istanbul, the banks, shops and leading restaurants close down on November 10th because that's the anniversary of the death of Ataturk, who died at 9.05 a.m. on November 10th, 1938, in the Dolmabahche Palace on the Bosphorus. In Italy they have some twenty public holidays, quite apart from innumerable saints' days. Most of the public holidays are linked to Assumption, Ascension, Epiphany, the Immaculate Conception or similar phenomena, but there is also a Victory Day on November 4th, commemorating the victory in 1918.

The only people who know all the Liberation Days and Independence Days and Freedom Days and National Days and Army Days and Revolution Days and Revolution Remembrance Days are the members of the diplomatic corps, who visit each other's embassies for free food and drink on these occasions. The rest of us risk getting caught with our cheques uncashed and business contacts uncontacted. Yes, even in America, a country widely thought to put business above all else. The wise traveller carries a U.S. diary listing all the legal holidays. It has whole pages of entry like 'Jan. 19. Robert E. Lee's Birthday: Ark., Fla., La., N.C., S.C., Tex.: Ala. and Miss. the third Mon. in Jan.' And that's only Lee's birthday; there are also those of Lincoln, Washington, Jefferson and Jefferson Davis. Plus, of course, Patriots Day. Confederate Memorial Day, Memorial or Decoration Day, Labour Day, Inauguration Day, Thanksgiving Day and a few other excuses for a binge. There's also American Indian day, which does not appear to be

a general public holiday except perhaps for Indians; for non-Indians, it is a time to meditate upon the wise and proper use of air, land and water.

Being late for business appointments, the Berlitz School of Language tells its students, is often a matter of local taste. Punctuality is important in Britain, the Phillippines, Portugal, Brazil and Argentina, although you can be an excusable ten to fifteen minutes late. In Scandinavian countries, however, don't be even a few minutes late. In the Middle East, a more casual attitude exists, and you can have up to half an hour's latitude. For social appointments, Scandinavians are quite prompt and appreciate the same from their guests. In the United Kingdom, guests should arrive within half an hour of the specified time for, say, dinner. In Portugal or Brazil, arrive about fifteen minutes 'late'. In Haiti, guests can arrive up to an hour or so late for dinner. The Philippines have a wholesome etiquette . . . arrival an hour after the specified time is permissible — unless the invitation says 'American Time', and that means on the dot.

Next to conferences one of the most interesting developments in business travel is the study tour. If I told you that I'm just off to visit a perfume factory in Capri, to study local manufacturing techniques for a month or two, or that I plan to join a group of Jersey market gardeners in Israel to see how the other half packs tomatoes, you wouldn't believe me and you would be right. But if you don't believe there *are* such things you would be wrong.

Study tours are a logical extension of the specialist holidays — or 'enrichment holidays', as Americans call them — which many travel firms have operated for years. You may have been on one yourself. Specialist holidays include everything from archaeological digs and work on a Kibbutz to adventure trekking expeditions, tours of nineteenth-century slate mines, painting trips to Paris, and lessons in Yoga. The American Institute for Foreign Study has had considerable success with — among other things — a 'spring garden' tour of England which includes visits to English country houses and botanical gardens, guided tours of London's parks, and lectures on topics like 'Soils and fertilisers' and 'Garden pests and diseases'.

The pure in heart make their bookings with Inter-Church Travel Ltd of Pall Mall, which offers 'tours that *are* holidays, and yet fulfil your and our ecumenical intention'. And while it can't give everyone their own private chaplain and tutor, Inter-Church does provide guides who can be described, as in the case of the St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross Spanish Tour, as 'a well-known Carmelite scholar'.

This is, you notice, a brochure of a very different calibre from those promising bronzed specimens of the opposite sex waiting to be chatted up in the disco or on the beach. And the sites to be visited by Inter-Church travellers are not dive bars, sandy bays or even classical glories, so much as 'the Monastery at Loyola, birthplace of St. Ignatius', to quote the blurb of the Spain and Portugal run. The Middle East trips include the tombs of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca and Jacob — providing the one-in-a-lifetime opportunity to exclaim, 'If this is Isaac it must be Wednesday' — and a 'coach to Cana of Galilee (the first miracle)'.

Rome offers the ultimate in tourist attractions, a Papal audience if possible, but no money back if the Holy Father doesn't show up. Overnight stays tend to be in the Guest House of the American Sisters, the Pastor Angelicus Guest House, or those worried about halfbuilt guest houses can kip down in the Nabatean caves. Prayers, Bible readings and easy terms can be laid on.

Others, unmoved by pilgrimages and left cold by tombs, see the potential of Europe in terms of how it can be captured by watercolour and brush. Patrons of Galleon Continental Painting Holidays want to know about any given spot: can it be said that 'the setting for the painter is delightful, and full of picture possibilities'? Furthermore, is it true that 'the immediate landscape is patterned with vines, with the country folk busy attending to the crops — beyond are sweeping woodlands adding further patterns and design, creating contrast and colour'? And can you say, hand on palette, that 'along the banks of the river the scenes and subjects vary from the gracious to the rugged'? In that case, Ehnen in Luxembourg sounds fine.

The study tour amounts to much the same thing, except that it rates as work. It goes under various names — fact-finding mission, business reconnaissance, and sales mission, and may be

initiated by business firms, chambers of commerce, professional or trade organisations. They may have a vertical structure — for example a common-interest nature as when sponsored by a trade association. All members of such a group would represent one industry, trade or profession. Or they may be horizontally structured — a tour of a mixed-interest nature such as would be sponsored by a chamber of commerce. Individual itineraries are arranged to suit the needs of each member of the group. This is a tailor-made tour in the strictest sense of the word.

The philosophy behind study tours is simple: in today's competitive world it pays to broaden one's knowledge at first hand through travel abroad. The fast progress in production and marketing techniques has led many companies and associations to send teams overseas on whirlwind visits or relevant plant and marketing establishments. The trend has been accelerated by the breakdown into specific trading blocs; it is, for example, of particular importance these days for a British shoe manufacturer to know at even shop floor level how his Italian counterpart operates, produces, and markets.

Not everyone, of course, welcomes a visit by his keen-eyed competitors. There are, inevitably, certain things which remain unseen, certain questions which go unanswered. But there are mutual advantages too — exchange of experiences, new contacts, stimulation of new ideas, broadening of understanding. Tourist authorities, airlines and chambers of commerce in different countries maintain lists of companies which are willing to have foreign study groups tour their plant and will usually help with specific arrangements.

British Airways, a pioneer in this field, has a special department which sets up tours at all-inclusive prices. There is, for example, the Bankers' Tour of America, which takes in visits to the Federal Reserve Bank and American Bankers' Association, meetings with major commercial and savings banks, a look at IBM's latest electronic data processing equipment, and a tour of the New York Stock Exchange as well as a trek around the United Nations. Or the jewellers' Tour of South Africa, which includes field visits to several diamond mines and — rather oddly — a display of tribal dancing by workers from the Witwatersrand gold mines. There is a Traffic and Transportation

Tour to Japan, a Hoteliers' Tour of Switzerland (including a coach excursion 'to medieval Gruyeres with visit to Model Cheese Factory') and an Archaeological Tour of Greece.

The list is long and often surprising: anti-pollution, dentistry, fashion, forestry, hospitals, irrigation, kinematography, pharmacy, watchmaking and zoology. Indeed British Airways is willing to consider almost anything, and one can't help marvelling at the possibilities — an Ascetics' Tour of Libya, a fan dancers' tour of French night-clubs, a comedians' tour of British working men's clubs. (If that sounds far-fetched reflect on this: tour operators have already taken Dartmoor prison officers to the Costa Brava, bridge builders to look at the bridge over the Bosphorus, and British Legionaires to inspect North African war graves.)

I have happy memories, myself, of two personal study tours, both connected with my favourite beverage. The first was to Bordeaux and involved visits to a dozen of the world's most famous wine cellars (it may have been more, but I lost count after the first six). The second was to the splendid vineyards of Tuscany. I have before me, as I write, a complete list of the *routes de vins* and I certainly hope to get around to them all. Sophocles was right: a man, though wise, should never be ashamed of learning more.

Study tours often serve as an inducement (or reward) for executives who have done particularly well or who seem like promising material. But there is another attraction, more directly geared to pleasure, which is currently enjoying great success: the incentive trip.

Incentive used to be a favourite political catchphrase, but today even Tory M.P.'s seem to find it easier to pretend that people work primarily for Britain. They don't. Salesmen work primarily for themselves, and the main incentive is a bigger pay cheque. Like it or not, that is the reality. Given our system of high taxes, though, other factors have increasingly come into play. Company chairmen know that perks can make all the difference between a lacklustre performance and a bit of sparkle. This is why so many organisations operate sales award schemes, with certificates, refrigerators, washing machines and other consumer products as the prizes. Incentive trips add an extra dimension. Most families, after all, have refrigerators

nowadays and gold watches are synonymous with long service or retirement — the very antithesis of sales motivation. Holiday incentives have a special appeal: they include a competitor's wife in the award and can be imaginatively promoted.

In America, of course, this has been accepted for years. And the idea has caught on in other countries. In France, for example, a number of companies nowadays specialise in incentive travel. Most French executives are still expected to work hard for eleven months of the year and then rush to the sea with all the other managerial lemmings. But last year more than 60,000 Frenchmen and their wives took a winter break as part of a productivity plan. Tupperware girls went to Tunisia, and so did 400 Castrol agents and their wives. Thousands of others were given special holidays — a week in a love nest in the Swiss Alps, a trip round France's best restaurants, fifteen days in Egypt, or safaris to Kenya with the wife.

In Britain store groups like Debenhams run incentive schemes aimed at encouraging a higher standard of service throughout their stores; travel prizes are the main reward. Just how the points are awarded in such schemes depends on a host of variables. With salesmen, a quota is usually fixed for each man's territory, based on performance in past years and average yield. Points are then related to a percentage margin exceeding the quota. But it is usual to consider other factors as well, such as the difference between a hitherto neglected territory in the North East and a nearly saturated one in South London.

As with study tours, airlines have been quick to recognise the potential. British Airways has a wide range of package trips, and will help with mailing shots, loan of display kits and special slides to generate interest at the start of a campaign. For really ambitious schemes it will also provide uniformed girls, organise pre-flight receptions, and arrange PR services. 'The great point about incentive schemes', says the airline in its own sales pitch, 'is that they are self-financing. The cost is covered by the extra turnover, production or profit which is achieved. They can be budgeted for out of extra, not current, earnings.' Looking ahead, airline excutives like Eric Thomas see incentive travel developing in directions other than sales and marketing. Many firms, he says, are getting around to the idea that the shop floor ought to participate — with trips awarded to

those who reach or exceed ambitious production targets, or who make useful suggestions in areas like quality control and safety. And in case that sounds like an incitement to managerial favouritism, he adds that 'you mustn't ration prizes in an incentive scheme. Motivation should go right through an organisation so that everyone has a chance to win.'

The British Tourist Authority, never slow off the mark, is working hard to make it a two-way trade. Its main target is the North American businessman, who is wooed with the slogan 'Great Britain — Great Incentive'. There are, it says, three interesting facts about North America's travel incentives to Europe. Firstly, that the top dealer incentives always have a large percentage of repeat winners; 'they work very hard to make sure they are on the next trip'. Secondly, with companies operating travel incentives for the first time a good seventy per cent of the participants have never left the U.S. before, although they are clearly in income brackets that can easily afford such ventures. Thirdly, the prize invariably includes the wife. 'The prize-giving company', says a B.T.A. spokesman, 'would not want to see any of its prize winners upset, and with his wife included, the company has recruited the wife in no uncertain way to its sales staff.'

Travel to Europe, the B.T.A. concedes, may not be all that unusual. Their neighbours may have been to Britain on a trip. But, it adds triumphantly, 'did a pipe band turn out to meet them at the airport? Did they have a banquet in a City of London livery hall? Was their last night farewell dinner celebrated with State Trumpeters and a Guards Band?'

CHAPTER FIVE

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SPLENDIDE?

WHAT makes a *grand* hotel? Size, as I have said, is not necessarily an advantage: the individual may be swamped. I dread the day when all hotels will be as huge, automated and impersonal as computer filing systems. The world's biggest hotel, the Hotel Russia in Moscow, holds 6,000 people in 3,000 rooms reached through four separate but very similar entrance lobbies and along apparently endless miles of dark beige-and-chocolate corridors. It is glum and rather frightening: one feels cut-off, insignificant, forgotten. I have had the same feeling in other jumbo hotels, notably in the United States. I dare say there are exceptions, but all too often one is treated as a number rather than as a guest. Perhaps this is inevitable: you can't expect hotel staff to recognise several thousand people by name, or to give you as much personal attention as you would get in a smaller establishment.

On the plus side, jumbo hotels tend to have better amenities — restaurants, shopping arcades, swimming pools and so on — and you may get more privacy. Once you have checked in you are on your own; in a smaller place, your movements tend to be more carefully watched — a fact of hotel life which can be irritating and, on occasion, embarrassing.

Fancy names are not necessarily a better guarantee of quality than size. Indeed, labels can be very misleading, especially in the so-called developing countries. 'Luxury hotel' may simply mean that some of the suites have bathrooms. 'A hotel with atmosphere' can just mean a hotel with dirt. And 'Grand' all too often turns out to be a euphemism for 'old'. Some governments, mindful of the need to protect foreign visitors, operate a classification system: each hotel is graded according to its

amenities. But 'luxury' and 'grand' are still largely a matter of opinion.

In Houston you can rent the Celestial Suite at the Astroworld Hotel for $2,500 (£1,000) a day and be absolutely certain of the last word in lushness, Texas style. It takes up the entire ninth floor and includes nine individual suites, each with a different theme: P. T. Barnum (Circus), Lillian Russell (Gay 90's), Adventure, or Tarzan (zebra skins and a tree), etc. There is also a library, the Golden Birdcage Room for dining, the Mini-Dome Room for receptions and the Monterey Kitchen.

A mere $2,000 a day will get you La Colina Solana, a complex adjoining the Arizona Biltmore in Phoenix. It has a foyer, dining- and living-rooms, and a bedroom wing. Described as 'pretty plush', it can accommodate up to twenty people. In New York, the Hilton offers two penthouse duplexes (three master bedrooms, baths and dressing-rooms; living-, dining- and study rooms; spiral staircase; original works of art, antiques and tapestries; private elevators) for $600 plus meals.

Even small-town motels can sometimes offer real surprises. In Gaithersburg, a community of little more than 8,000 people on the outskirts of Metropolitan Washington, the local Holiday Inn has a presidential suite which rents for $1,400 a night. The living-room is furnished with Chippendale pieces, a rare Chinese rug, old books and a mahogany table that opens out to seat six. The master bedroom, in gold-and-white French rococo-modern decor, features a large, circular, motorised bed — the kind which helped to put Hugh Hefner on the map. The headboard is equipped with taps dispensing scotch and soda, bourbon and martinis, and there is a console of buttons to activate other presidential amenities, including an eight-track stereo system and a twenty-five-inch remote-controlled TV. The Roman bath adjacent to the master bedroom is straight out of a Fellini fantasy for tired Americans. Almost a miniature swimming pool, the seven-foot square whirlpool tub features fourteen-carat gold soap dishes and fixtures. A nearby sink sports leaping gold dolphins. There is a bidet and a cedar-lined sauna. Twenty-five light bulbs in golden holders circle the dressing-table mirror. The second bedroom, called the Vice-president's Room, features a massive heated waterbed. Working hours can be whiled away in the executive office (complete with huge desk

and boxes of 'vintage cigars') or the executive conference room featuring, among other things, a gold chandelier and fully-stocked bar. But ostentatious opulence of this kind may not be your scene, even if the expense account will stand it. It certainly isn't mine.

For Robert Morley, a man who likes his comfort, a grand hotel has to have 'the smell of confidence that comes from perfection'. Predictably, he tends to be drawn to the older hotels: his favourites are the Ritz in Paris, Claridge's in London, the Imperial in Vienna, and the Gritti Palace in Venice. Places which are quietly elegant and which tend to be more of a club than a hotel, and more of a home than either. I won't quarrel with his choice, but I confess I am as wary of venerable establishments — unless I happen to know them personally — as I am of the aforementioned jumbos. Too many of them live on past reputations. The 'smell of confidence' is more a smell of musty arrogance. The plumbing is ancient and noisy, air-conditioning is non-existent, the paint is peeling everywhere, and the staff all look about ninety. Outside, the traffic roars past and, as the place was built in the days before the motor car, there is no protection against the infernal din. The porter and the bellboys are dressed like eighteenth-century courtiers, for the benefit of tourists, and have never heard of TV and telex machines. The dining-room is ornate but deadly quiet: conversations are conducted in a whisper. Last, but not least, the price reflects the high opinion which the proprietors clearly have of themselves and their establishment.

Sometimes, of course, the opinion is justified. One of my own favourites, among older hotels, is the Plaza in New York. Opened in 1907, the Plaza has won such titles as 'The Dowager Queen of American Hotels', and 'The Last of the Big Splendors'. Its eighteen stories were designed along the lines of a French Renaissance chateau and, more than any other American hotel, the Plaza has long exemplified the elegance of a Continental *hotel de grand luxe*. It has a thousand rooms (proving that size *need* not be a barrier to greatness), six or seven restaurants catering for every taste except a cannibal's, and splendid bars. The staff are attentive and polite — a welcome contrast to many other New York hotels where the manager explains, apologetically, that he dare not censure his people for

rudeness and inefficiency because, if he did, they would leave him stranded. A $9 million restoration completed last year was the latest stage in a continuing programme of alteration and refurbishment which has kept the Plaza up to date — without, at the same time, losing its dinstinctive atmosphere.

Many businessmen stay there chiefly because of its social *cachet*. The first entry in its register, back in 1907, was 'Mr. and Mrs. Vanderbilt and servant' and the management proudly claims that, since then, it has been host to Everybody. Many of New York's great social functions are held here, and in the business community the Plaza undeniably rates as a Good Address. To status-conscious New Yorkers this is an important factor: if you stay at the Plaza you are considered to be a man of both taste and substance. A letter written on Plaza stationery, of course, also impresses the 'folks back home'.

In London, Claridge's has the same attributes. So many monarchs, presidents and ambassadors have stayed there over the years that it is known, among regulars, as the 'annexe to Buckingham Palace'. If you want to do business with the City, this is Britain's best address. Film producers, too, find it a useful launching pad for their ambitious, and costly, projects. Some people swear, however, that Brown's and the Connaught are more comfortable and no less prestigious. Perhaps so; both certainly come into the *grand luxe* category.

The Ritz in Paris, which Morley calls the greatest hotel in the world, is really two hotels, one situated in Place Vendôme and the other in the Rue Cambon. It is an extravagant building, constructed in the days before hotel owners discovered how to make bigger profits by conserving space. The vast foyer, the elegant arcade (with its showcases glittering with diamonds) and the plush restaurants are a delight to anyone who regrets the demise of the aristocratic style. The bedrooms are large and magnificent: the gilt and glitter, the huge wardrobes, the small sofas, the brass bedsteads and the golden clocks make the visitor feel that he has stepped back into the eighteenth century. I prefer the present day — but I'd rather have the Ritz than the Holiday Inn in Gaithersburg.

The trend today, of course, is towards standardisation. On waking in the morning you have to look up your itinerary to see where you are, so similar is the style and decor to countless

other newly-erected commuter hotels all over the world. All these places have been carefully designed for the jet age traveller: keeping him snugly contained in a capsule of status and comfort. This instant, prefabricated luxury may strike you as sad, but it does have one considerable advantage: you know what to expect. If you stick to a chain like Hilton there are no unpleasant surprises in store on arrival. The traveller feels instantly at home in the familiar surroundings; he has a base from which to venture forth into the unknown (and possibly hostile) world outside the entrance door. And advance bookings are no problem: stay in one hotel of a group and you can book accommodation in any other, anywhere in the world, at very short notice.

In 1970, a consortium of five airlines — including B.E.A. and B.O.A.C. — got together to build a chain of 'Penta' medium-priced hotels. The idea at the start was to provide modern amenities at convenient city centre locations but at rates as much as fifty per cent below those charged by first class hotels in the same city. To achieve this, they formulated a 'fined down operation', putting the accent on optional amenities. Patrons of luxury hotels, they argued, tend to pay big sums for all the high grade services offered, whether they use them or not. At Penta hotels, the guest pays for the facilities he opts to use. The scheme has been a marked success, and the consortium has ambitious expansion plans.

Hotels like these may not strike you as particularly romantic, but they are infinitely better than some of the older places in the same price range. My pet hate is a hotel where the rooms are tiny, the plumbing noisy and uncertain, the lifts wheezy, and the beds squeaky. Paris is full of them. I don't want to overhear my neighbour's midnight phone calls (in France, it seems, everyone has to shout to make himself heard) and I have no desire to eavesdrop on other people's love lives. I have checked out of more than one hotel, after the first night, because its walls were impossibly thin and I expect the same thing has probably happened to you.

There are, of course, certain precautions one can take with this type of hotel. Write in advance, insisting on a room away from the street. (Many hotels are built around a central well, and rooms with windows opening on to this are quieter than the

ones with a view of the Boulevard. But note: avoid inner rooms on very warm nights when windows are flung open. The surge and thunder of snoring then rolls up and down the shaft.) On arrival carefully check that the room allocated isn't next to a lift, or over a night club or swimming pool. The later people go to bed the louder they slam lift doors. And night clubs stay open for an awfully long time. Try, if you can, to gauge the thickness of the walls. If your neighbour is in, and listening to the radio or watching TV, this is easy. If he isn't, you may be in for a nasty surprise just as you settle down to sleep. I usually ask the hotel employee who takes me upstairs if the room next door is vacant — and, if the answer is yes, I politely but firmly demand to see it. I then hand over his tip, and make a small request: would he please shout 'Good morning!' as soon as I have nipped into my own adjoining room? He usually thinks I am madly eccentric (well, wouldn't you?) but refusals are comparatively rare. And if I can *hear* that brisk 'Good morning' — well, I know just where I stand.

If the hotel is full, of course, none of this will be to much avail. The reception clerk will simply tell you that nothing else is available. Sir Charles Forte, who heads one of the world's largest hotel chains, once told me a rather charming anecdote. He and his wife had booked at a swish hotel in Rio de Janeiro — this was before he became a prominent hotelier — and on arrival found themselves confronted with a supercilious and distinctly unhelpful clerk. Yes, agreed, there was a booking. No, he didn't have a room. Not even a broom cupboard. There was nothing, but nothing, he could do. Forte waited an hour and then hit on an idea. 'What,' he asked the doorman, 'is the name of your chef?' 'Rossi,' the doorman said. Forte turned and made for the kitchen, where he addressed the startled Signor Rossi in fluent Italian. Three minutes (and several embraces) later the chef picked up a phone; ten minutes later Forte and his wife were installed in a large and comfortable suite.

If you can't speak Italian — or French — you can always abuse the fellow behind the desk in eloquent English. But before you do, make a few discreet telephone calls to other hotels in town. They may give you the same answer — and *then* what do you do?

The ideal solution, of course, is to stick to hotels which are

known to you, or to a reliable friend. It also helps if they know *you*. Every reasonably good hotel makes some attempt to look after its regulars. A letter to the manager, before your departure, will generally assure you of a decent room. Many hotels also keep a card index; a swift glance at your entry will show the reception clerk that you have been there before, and your plea for peace will get a sympathetic hearing. You may even find a bowl of fruit (or, in expensive hotels, a bottle of champagne) sent to your room while you are still unpacking.

Hotels which are part of a major chain generally offer standard equipment like radio, direct dial telephone, television, bath and shower. Many also have a self-service drinks and/or continental breakfast dispenser. The help-yourself bar usually consists of a bedside icebox stacked with drinks of all kinds, the key to which is attached to your door key. On top is a price list, and your consumption is recorded in one of two ways: automatically, down at the desk, or by a discreet daily check on the contents. Some hotels ask you to enter each item on a special form. There is no point in cheating, because they have ways of keeping track. The aim, of course, is to tempt you to have that extra pre-lunch cocktail or nightcap, and as far as I'm concerned it succeeds splendidly.

If there isn't a mini-bar, a refrigerator is the next best thing. You can stock up with drinks of your own, and you will never run short of ice. Refrigerators tend to be small and well hidden, but at one of Moscow's better hotels I once had a monster which, if necessary, would have allowed me to stock enough food and drink for my entire stay. Given the long delays in Moscow restaurants (they are notorious for their slow service) this struck me as very thoughtful: I lived for days on smoked salmon, caviar and nicely chilled vodka.

In the United States, where security can be a major problem, there are some ingenious new methods to free the hotel guest from worry. One is a system called Telebeam. Each guest receives along with his room key a punched card which he inserts into the Telebeam — a small console on top of the TV set — after entering the room. Until the card is inserted, the device beams a warning to the hotel's central computer. An unauthorised person going into the room would not be able to stop the alarm which the computer would send to the hotel's

security department. The Telebeam also has a dial which gives the guest access to travel and entertainment information stored in the computer. The information sought is flashed up on the TV screen.

In another security-conscious establishment, the Carolando Motor Inn near Orlando, Florida, guests are computer-registered at a drive-in centre, then led to their room by a bell-hop on a mini-bike. There's no old fashioned key to the door. Instead, you simply insert a punched code card into the door slot. The card is safer than a key and virtually as personal as your thumbprint, because the code is changed with each new guest. Old-style room service is replaced by a push-button food and beverage device in each room, and the TV set shows full length closed circuit movies.

There are, fortunately, still countries where elaborate precautions are unnecessary. But it usually makes sense to deposit cash, jewellery and other valuables in the hotel safe — if only for peace of mind.

Another pleasant novelty is one of those electrical devices which, for a small charge, turns your bed into a masseur. You simply drop a coin into a bedside box and the whole thing starts vibrating. Very soothing — and it saves a trip to the massage parlour which, together with sauna baths, are nowadays a feature of many hotels. (Nothing, of course, beats those Japanese inns where an attractive and skilful masseuse will walk all over you on request, or discover all kinds of communication centres in your neck and shoulders that you never knew you had.)

If you are the outdoor type, and your schedule allows a little extra time, you should also look at the sports facilities on offer before telling your secretary to make a booking. Tennis courts and proximity to a good golf course are often worth a rather longer journey into town.

Which brings me, in an oblique sort of way, to a question which travel books generally ignore: *How can you take Mrs. Smith along with you?* Security is fine as long as it protects one from the outside world, *including* hotel staff. It gets tiresome when an assistant manager knocks on your door in the early hours, and demands to know whether the lady sharing your slumbers is your lawfully wedded life companion. Many hotel proprietors don't care what you do as long as you pay your bill:

some hotels even encourage this kind of activity. Others have never heard of permissiveness — or if they have, they disapprove. It isn't necessarily a matter of moral judgment. Their scruples are more likely to be connected with business. Easy-going hotels can easily acquire a reputation as bordellos, and be shunned by more straight-laced — and prosperous clients.

If you do take a friend on a business trip (and *I* am not about to ask whether you are a bachelor) the first rule is *not to be mean.* There is nothing profit conscious hoteliers dislike more than attempts to smuggle girl friends into a single. Always book a double room — or better still, a suite. A suite removes all possible objection, not only because the hotel makes twice as much, but also because the proprietors assume that no gentleman would ever stray from his quarters to those of the lady's. If there is the slightest risk of awkward calls from home the safest course is to book adjoining rooms, and *not* to check in as Mr. and Mrs. Smith. It could prove cheaper in the long run. It also saves having to give explanations in countries where they ask to see your passport on arrival, as they are legally obliged to do in Italy or France.

The most obvious ploy, if you *are* challenged, is to tell the assistant manager (or anyone else who asks) that you and your legal wife have parted many years ago, that the lady in question has looked after you ever since, that you have two lovely *bambinos* at home, and that you are going to get married as soon as the divorce comes through. It rarely fails, because such situations are all too common.

The French, who claim to have more understanding in these matters, may guide you to a *hotel particulier* (literally, 'private hotel') which specialise in minimum check-in fuss and maximum discretion and that also includes ceiling and sidewall mirrors, multicolour lights, music controlled by bedside switches, round-the-clock-champagne, caviar and paté, direct entrance from garage to bedroom, and noiseless concierges. Paris has a number of these havens, and the afternoon traffic tends to be as formidable as the overnight activity. But the world's most thoughtful providers are probably the owners of Tokyo's Meguro Emperor Hotel. This is one of some 10,000 'love hotels' which cater unashamedly, and quite legally, for couples who want to make love. You can rent by the hour or

overnight. Businessmen take their mistresses there for an afternoon session. Even married couples make use of them, because Japan's cramped and overcrowded homes with paper-thin walls often make it impossible for a couple to have any kind of privacy. With their gardenia-scented atmosphere of soft lights and sparkling fountains, hotels like the Emperor specialise in putting everyone in the mood.

To avoid any possible embarrassment, there's no register to sign. At the Emperor, where a husky female voice whispers a recorded welcome as you come through the door, they're so discreet that the desk clerk is screened behind a curtain so that he doesn't even see your face. Each of the hotel's thirty rooms has an exotic name like 'Shrine on the Moon'. There's a waiting list for the most popular bedroom, which rents at around £40 a night. In that room, at the touch of a button, panels on the walls and ceilings slide back so that the room is entirely encased in mirrors. A bedside control gives you a choice of seven different light colours. A nearby room features a bed which slowly rises six feet into the air on a kind of pneumatic jack. Yet another bed is surrounded by a moat. And in one room you can simulate a thunderstorm by throwing a switch which sends raindrops spattering on to the canopy above the bed.

If none of this turns you on, there are TV sets which, at the touch of a button, will give you pornographic films. Some of the rooms even have video television cameras so couples can make a film of themselves making love, and then play it back later. 'It's very popular,' says the hotel manager.

A grand hotel, for me, is one which knows how to give just the right amount of personal attention. I don't want to have lackeys hovering at the door throughout the day and night, but I do like to have prompt service. I don't want to pay good money (even the company's) for surly porters, snarling telephone operators, and insolent waiters. I don't want to wait for an hour for breakfast, and I don't want to argue over mysterious items on the bill. Some hotels see each customer as a potential goldmine, to be tricked into paying for more than he should. They have all sorts of extras which you don't usually find out about until it's time to leave. And they have a carefully worked-out way of boosting your bar account. Usually this consists of not telling you the price (few people ask) and then charging an

exorbitant figure. Or the manager will suggest a round of drinks, giving the impression that he is playing host to valued guests, and then quietly tell the barman to charge it to your room.

Hotels like this may think they are smart, and regrettably there are plenty of travellers who will go along with their game rather than make a fuss. Subsequent legal action generally costs more than one could possibly hope to get back. The most obvious answer is also the most effective: give the place a miss in future and tell all your friends and colleagues to do the same.

Humphrey Lyttleton, the jazz musician, says he was once roused from five hours' sleep with the words: 'Come on, be a sport—let's have yer sheets!' He was lucky to get five hours. Chambermaids tend to see hotel guests both as a nuisance and as a challenge. A nuisance because they get in the way of the elaborate ritual of cleaning, and a challenge because they occasionally resort to underhand moves like locking doors. Chambermaids have little patience with guests who assume that paying for a room entitles them to luxuries like a lie-in. There's work to be done and it doesn't matter that you may have stayed too late at that banquet or painted the town red. The town was the right colour before you came along and that, as far as they are concerned, is how it's going to stay.

The bed sheets routine, a sort of strip-tease in reverse, is only part of the repertoire. The chief aim of every chambermaid is to get into your room as early as possible in order to remove any illusions you might have formed that a hotel is just like a home. A shouted warning is, in my experience, a fairly unusual concession. Most chambermaids prefer to burst into the room, after the briefest of knocks. I dare say it's the way they get their kicks; for all I know it is a favourite game, with bets taken in advance on what is likely to meet the eye. A company chairman, perhaps, doing his morning exercises in the buff? Or a managing director explaining the finer points of discounted cash flows to his lady love?

Inexperienced travellers tend to put their faith in those impressive DO NOT DISTURB signs provided by the management. Alas, they won't necessarily impress the chambermaids. If, in her judgment, you have used up your allotted time, and your

apparent lack of concern for her own schedule threatens to wreck the day, she will not hesitate to assert her authority.

Her principal weapon, if you resist, is that great folk instrument, the vacuum cleaner. Skilfully used (and every chambermaid is, of course, a professional) it will wake even the most stubborn customer and defy any attempt to prolong the allotted rest period. It may, or may not, be accompanied by a noisy debate about the merits of the previous night's TV programmes or by an enthusiastic rendering of 'Around the World in Eighty Days'. It may, or may not, be strengthened by the radio in the empty room next door. It's up to you.

The only foolproof defence, in my experience, is a bribe. (Don't, whatever you do, complain to the manager. He won't sack her, because chambermaids are harder to come by than guests, and she will regard your move as an open declaration of war.) Try to discover her name, on the first day, and use it at your first meeting. With luck, this will establish you as a human being instead of a unit which is temporarily occupying her territory. Tell her that you suffer from a disease for which there is no known cure, but which can be mitigated if you can get twelve hours sleep at night. Then slip her a little folding money. Your bed may never get made at all (especially if you try that kind of trick in countries like Italy, France and the United States) but you can't have everything, can you?

First names (and bribes) may also work with that other formidable warrior, the waiter. If he is Italian, let him tell you about the little village where he was born, about his mother, and about his wife and six children. If he is French allow him to talk politics, and if he's English let him explain why Arsenal (or Chelsea, or Manchester United) is the best football team in the world. You may get bored, but at least you should be able to rely on a little service. He won't scowl if you point out that your food is cold, that the Chablis is lukewarm, and that the bill includes items which never came within a mile of your table. He may even slip you a few extra strawberries.

The danger, of course, is that he won't stop talking. Most waiters, like most hairdressers, consider themselves infinitely more interesting than any lunch or dinner companion you may have brought along. And if you are alone, he may regard it as his duty to entertain as well as serve you. But it's better to have

a waiter on your side than in opposition: the restaurant is one battleground where the customer seldom wins.

The rules of the game, his game, are simple enough. Hostile customers are shown to the worst table and then ignored. Complaints are met with a shrug: it's not his fault that the place is so popular and besides, that's not his table. When he finally takes your order he will do so with an air of contempt, calculated to embarrass not only you (other customers will, of course be watching) but also your companion. If she is female, he will give her his My-God-what-are-you-doing-with-a-louse-like-this look and then offer her unpriced items not on the menu, and usually involving lobster, caviar or asparagus, describing the dish with much confidential wagging of the pencil as if it had that moment been concocted specially for her. The aim is to boost your bill to an astronomical figure, and he usually succeeds.

When the entrées have been cleared away he will, in the fulness of time, approach you with a huge bowl of strawberries, irrespective of the season. These again will not be priced on the menu and in mid-December you will be justifiably overtaken by dire foreboding.

The scope widens, for him, if you are foolish enough to order wine. He will wait with ill-disguised impatience while you struggle through the list and greet your choice with astonishment. 'Well, sir,' he will say, 'if you insist. But I would recommend the Chateau Lafitte 1939.' A faultless choice, but then it *should* be at £35 a bottle.

The wine will arrive while you are halfway through the main course (and after half a dozen angry remonstrations) and will stand on your table, unopened, for ten minutes more. Or, if you have agreed to the Lafitte, it will be brought *before* the caviar and opened at once. Each sip will be replaced as you and your companion take it, and the bottle will be empty by the time he gets around to serving the steak or lobster. As host, you are in a difficult position. You may leave your glass untouched for minutes on end, but there is no guarantee that your guest will do the same. The only known counter-move is to pick up the bottle whenever you see him dart towards you, pour a few driblets, and wave him away with your free hand.

You can, of course, try to punish him at the end of the meal

by withholding a tip. But with most restaurants now automatically adding a fixed service charge this may not work — and, in any case, the pleasure he has had from your discomfort and annoyance is probably reward enough. You can still threaten not to return — but that, as far as he is concerned, was the whole purpose of his little exercise.

I dare say there are honourable exceptions. Nothing like this may ever have happened to you, and you may feel that I am guilty of gross exaggeration. Well, perhaps. But there is nothing to stop you making your own experiment, next time you are in a really aggressive mood. Be sure, though, to be armed with ample funds when you do. And don't write afterwards to say I didn't warn you.

Which brings me to the third member of the triumvirate, the taxi-driver. He is indispensable to most business travellers, and he knows it. If you pick a fight with him, you do so at your peril.

I know taxi-drivers the world over and, like every traveller, I have my own league table. The most hazardous rides I have ever had were, unquestionably, in South America. In Buenos Aires every driver sees himself as a rival to Jackie Stewart. The car is an extension of his ego and you, the passenger, merely exist to finance his fantasies. Traffic lights are a nuisance to be ignored: I gave up counting the number of times we went through them. Appeals are fruitless. He either doesn't understand English or pretends not to; this is his city and you are expected to sit back and, if you wish, pray. Rio de Janeiro (which also has the most beautiful, and the most treacherous beach in the world — the Copacabana) comes a close second. You hail a cab and, if you are lucky, he will stop for just long enough to take you aboard. He will roar away before you have had a chance to close the door, let alone tell him where you want to go. The ride will be about as smooth as a trip in a light aircraft during a force nine gale. I once encountered a madman who, during a fifteen minute journey, succeeded in hitting two buses, a car, and a tree before he finally deposited me at the wrong address.

Tokyo taxi-drivers *ought* to be both placid and efficient, but they are neither. The average driver is pure *kamikaze*, and he behaves as if he is a total stranger in an admittedly confusing

city. In three visits to Japan I have never yet met a single cabbie who could take me to the right address without stopping three or four times as ask the way. The same thing has happened to me in New York — but there, I am told, it is more likely to be a cunning way of running up a large fare on the meter. Moscow taxi-drivers know their way around, but tend to act as if the job is beneath their dignity. If you are alone you are expected to sit at the front; anything else makes him look like a chauffeur and is, therefore, a capitalist insult. Paris drivers have a marked reluctance to travel in any direction other than towards their home and the bosom of their family. They don't like foreigners unless they speak good French and are willing to ignore the fact that the meter has been switched off — a strategy which, of course, will allow them to charge a grossly inflated fare. New York cabbies hate each other more than the customer: they snarl at other drivers like hungry crocodiles in an overcrowded swamp. London drivers — well, I hope that I don't sound too chauvinistic when I say that, in my opinion, they are the best. They *have* been known to overcharge, and even to get lost, but the general standard of both drivers and, no less importantly, the cabs themselves, is encouragingly high.

Generalisations are always open to challenge, but there is one statement which I think can be made without much fear of contradiction. Taxi-drivers love to talk. No matter that the information they impart is out-of-date, inaccurate and barely proximate to what really goes on. Listen. It's an easy way to make a friend. And it will help you to understand the press; most of the inside dope and reliable resources and public opinion you see quoted in your newspapers probably came from this cabby who drove the visiting newspaper correspondent around yesterday.

Alan Brien, who writes for *Punch* and *The Sunday Times*, tells of an experience in New York which I think is a classic of its kind. He swears it is true. He was on Madison Avenue when a cab stopped to pick him up. 'You must be Limey,' the driver began. 'From England, huh, I guess.' Alan agreed and went on: 'You're going to tell me you like Britishers. And the reason you like Britishers is that you were a GI in Britain during the war, and everybody was just wonderful — right?'

'Right,' he said, grudging him the air space.

'And the other reason you like Britishers,' Alan went on remorselessly, 'is that your daughter, Sadie, married a Limey cop and now lives in Welwyn Garden City. And she has two kids, Sidney the elder and Rachel the younger.'

'Rachel's the first born,' the cabbie muttered. 'Say, you some kinda mindreader?'

'And you and your wife, I forget her name, are going to London to visit with them on June the, em, er, June the fifth. You've been saving for years and because you don't like flying you're going by sea. You've got some really cute gifts for the grandchildren. Sidney the older, I mean the younger, is going to love the . . .'

The cab stopped with a screech, partly brakes, mainly hysteria. 'Mac,' he sobbed. 'Is it ESP or what?'

Alan savoured the feeling of rolling another human being in his hand, like a marble. 'Eliminate the impossible, as Sherlock Holmes once said, and what is left, however improbable, must be the truth. You picked me up at the same time at the same place last night and we had the same conversation. Only you were talking and I was listening.'

Of course one can't win them all so neatly. But there are a few basic rules which, if followed, should at least give you a reasonable chance. Never show a taxi-driver an address on the back of an envelope, the surest sign of the sucker the world over. Never allow him to turn off the meter without first telling you what the journey is likely to cost. And remember that there is always an atavistic rivalry between taxi-drivers and policemen: if you suspect you might be overcharged stop him at a busy intersection and beckon the nearest guardian of the law. If you can't speak the local language try at least to pronounce the address like a native — and then pre-empt any further attempt of conversation by burying your nose in a newspaper. If you can speak the language, beat the driver to the draw by telling him *your* troubles — your problems at the office, your wife's belligerence, your starving children, and so on. (The bit about the children works particularly well in Italy; he might even refuse to take a tip.)

I dread to think of a world without taxis, but of course there are alternatives. If I have to stay anywhere for more than a couple of days I generally hire a car and drive myself. British

Airways has a Free-wheeler scheme which is justly popular: two or more people travelling together can fly out on scheduled flights and collect a car, for seven days, at little or no extra cost. All Freewheeler trips include comprehensive insurance and unlimited mileage, so you simply buy the petrol as you go.

International companies like Hertz and Avis have an impressive network of agencies, not only at airports but in most major cities. You simply reserve a car before leaving, go to the Hertz or Avis desk on arrival, sign a piece of paper, collect the key and go on your way. At the end of the trip you deposit the car at the same — or some other — airport. (Both companies have also extended their range of other drop-off arrangements.) There is no need to use up foreign exchange to pay the bill: they will accept all the major credit cards. I have both an Avis and Hertz *company* card, which means the bill goes directly to the firm's accountant back home — a delightfully painless deal.

If you need to impress the natives with your importance (or if you merely enjoy maximum comfort) you can, of course, hire a Rolls or Cadillac and engage a chauffeur. But beware. In some countries it will be seen as an offensive bit of one-upmanship and may do more harm than good. In others it may strengthen the resolve of your local business partners to ask for tougher terms. In California or Texas a Rolls may cause little or no attention; in Kingston, Bombay or Nairobi it could saddle you with the wrong kind of reputation.

Driving abroad involves other hazards — some obvious, such as the need to keep to a different side of the road, and some unexpected. In Italy, for example, traffic coming from the right (even traffic from a minor road) has priority and cars will shoot straight in front of you, in the confident assumption that you will slam on your brakes. In Germany, traffic already on the roundabout *always* has priority. Overtaking is more rigidly controlled on the Continent than it is in Britain and in countries like France police may impose on-the-spot fines if you disobey road signs. The laws about driving after drinking alcohol may also be much tougher than you think; you could even find yourself in prison.

In practice, I have found that local police are usually more lenient with foreign visitors than with their own people. I suspect this is largely because they are not quite sure how to deal

with the situation, let alone its aftermath. It helps not to be able to speak the language; a humble, contrite, pleading look is usually more effective. I once disrupted busy traffic by taking a wrong turn in the middle of Marseilles and was promptly stopped by an irate policeman. I played it dumb, pretending that the only word of French in my vocabulary was 'airport' which I repeated, in a loud voice, over and over again. He abandoned his lecture (no use wasting official prose on stupid foreigners) and, to my wife's amazement, began to draw an elaborate map. He then held up the traffic so that we could take another forbidden U-turn and set course for the airport. He even gave us a smart salute. I could, of course, have told him that we had just *come* from the airport and that my wife was French — but that would have been *really* stupid.

On another occasion I was stopped by a police patrol in California. I was driving one of those Detroit dream-chariots which make our own Jaguars and Jensens look like tin boxes (Avis didn't seem to have anything else in stock that day) and which react wildly to the slightest touch on the steering. It seems that a fellow motorist had been incensed by my apparent lack of lane discipline and had contacted the local police on his car telephone. The patrol car roared up with sirens blaring, followed by another which had also responded to the call. Two tough cops, guns at the side, leaped out. I explained that I was from England, had only been in California two days, had hired that monster two hours before, and had not meant to break any laws. The officer in charge inspected my driving licence, asked me if I was familiar with Californian laws (no!) and urged me to be more careful. Then, to the chagrin of the motorist who had reported me (oh yes, he'd turned up to make sure that I was properly punished) he launched into a series of questions about the Royal Family, the latest sterling crisis (bless you, dear old pound) and David Frost. I answered them as best I could and we parted, unpunished, with warm handshakes all round.

Brushes with the law don't always turn out so well. And, of course, there may be times when you have good reason to wish that police were more efficient. You may, for example, have your car broken into even though it is parked in a supervised car park or lock-up garage. Travellers are the car thief's joy: despite all warnings most people leave valuables on the back

seat, or in the boot, while they go off to lunch or dinner. The police will listen to your complaints but there is usually little they can do, especially in the short time you are spending in that particular area. They can do even less about that other type of thief: the rapacious garage owner who sees every breakdown of a foreign car as a personal gift from the Almighty. The only answer to him is to arm yourself before departure, with a complete list of service agencies for your own make of car (they could lose their agency if they cheat) and to insist on a firm estimate before authorising any kind of repair.

A year or two ago we asked *High Life* readers, tongue in cheek, what six features they felt every Euro-car should have. One suggested presentation sets of cufflinks (or handcuffs?) inscribed 'With Greetings from Scotland Yard' for use as gifts to continental police patrols in awkward moments. But the best idea came from a man in Tunbridge Wells: retractable wing-tip pennants (General, Minister, football idol, pop star, etc.) for beating traffic jams or when exceeding speed limits. It's worth a try.

A few years back, the Kremlin ran a campaign against the capitalist practice of tipping. They said it was an insult to the worker's dignity. I happened to be in Moscow at the time, and my Russian friends went around asking each other, 'Can I insult you?' and reassuring visitors like me that all kinds of monetary humiliations were welcome. Moscow taxi-drivers certainly seemed far from unwilling to be affronted — especially if one offered Western currency. In some Communist countries you haven't a hope of getting decent service in a restaurant unless you slip the waiter a tip *before* he has done anything for you. Tipping, in short, is universal.

Many hotels and restaurants nowadays have a fixed service charge which they automatically add to the bill. The practice is widely supported. The Transport and General Workers' Union, taking its cue from the Kremlin, says tips are 'iniquitous' and a president of the National Hairdressers' Federation has called them 'the Maundy money of the twentieth century'. Surely, he says, the class barriers between aristocratic and lowly born tradesmen have long ago been abolished.

One partner in the trading transaction of buying a meal or paying for a hairdo has no need to dispense lordly dole to the other.

Yes, my friend, he does. Try to deprive a hairdresser, porter, waiter, or cab driver of what he considers to be his God-given right and you will usually have a cause for regret. At the very least he will give you a withering look and make a mental note to take his revenge the next time. More often than not, he will either make some scathing personal comment, in a voice loud enough to be heard by everyone in the vicinity, or launch into colourful abuse. A fixed service charge is all very well, but its novelty tends to wear off rather quickly and he will still expect his 'lordly dole'. So for the customer the result of attempts to abolish tipping is that he either ends up paying more than he did under the old system, or gets poor service.

The word tip takes its original meaning from the phrase 'to insure promptness'. Skilfully done it still has that effect. Slip the *Maitre d'* at a busy restaurant a bit of folding money and you will be seated before less open-handed rivals; you may even secure that coveted table by the window. Tell the taxi-driver that you will pay him extra if he gets you to the airport in half the usual time and he will turn into a veritable Jackie Stewart. Give the hotel doorman an ample tip and you will never lack for instant transport. Generosity is remembered. A regular customer at a restaurant or hotel can make reasonably sure of getting special attention on future visits if he has tipped the right people at the right time.

If you are new to the place, it may be good strategy to tip in instalments. If you give the *maitre d'* his whole tip at the beginning of your stay, you may get better service than if you waited until the end, when his regrets at having neglected you can't do much good. But then again you may not: once he's got his money from you he just might concentrate on the unknown quantity to come from other customers. Buy his goodwill with half the tip at the start, and tell him that there is more to come if he keeps you happy.

My own objection to tipping is not so much based on the argument that it degrades, but that it has come to be taken for granted. The service trades exist to serve and I don't see anything humiliating about a customer showing his appreciation

for a job well done. Words of thanks may be enough for some people, but the majority prefer something more tangible. Today, however, you are expected to tip even if you have had poor service. A waiter may keep you waiting for half an hour before he even deigns to hand you the menu, spill wine on your clothes, and forget that you asked for vegetables with your main course. His appearance may be sloppy and his manner insolent. But he will still expect you to leave something extra. I never do. There are times when it's better to risk a scene than to give in; this is one of them.

Some waiters simply fail to bring your change, loftily assuming that the whole amount was meant for them. They know that if you are with business friends you will probably find it embarrassing to make any sort of fuss. Or, more commonly, they will bring your change in such denominations that you either have to leave an outsize tip or ask him to split it into smaller amounts — a gesture which your friends may find niggardly. The answer is either to carry a pocketful of small change with you, and put down the planned amount, or to ask him calmly and without further comment to change the pound note, or whatever, for you. Under no circumstances indicate that you are annoyed.

For the business traveller, tipping can be a source of considerable irritation, especially if one is not familiar with local currency and customs. So many people seem to think of foreign visitors as easy prey. Everyone greets you with open hands — palm upwards. You are anxious to do the Right Thing, but you don't want to be taken either. So you are suspicious of everyone and everything — an exhausting business. It saves both time and trouble to check in advance (embassies will always give you the form and so will most guidebooks) and to take a modest amount of local change with you. Airports and railway stations sometimes display signs showing the local scale of charges for porters and taxis; if not, you can always ask a likely looking official to give you a rough idea. At the hotel make a point of asking whether a service charge is added to the bill: the practice is by no means general and there is no need to overtip. I once forgot to check, and found at the end of my week's stay that the hotel had added twenty per cent to a quite considerable bill. Meanwhile, thinking there was no service

charge, I had been rather free with my tips for individual members of the staff. It was an expensive lesson.

Customs vary so widely from one country to another, and from one establishment to the next, that it's difficult to make any generalisation, but fifteen per cent seems to be the most common service charge in hotels and restaurants. Waiters will still look for five to ten per cent on top of that. If service is not included, I generally leave around fifteen per cent.

There are, of course, cases where tips are not expected and may even cause offence. You should not, for example, tip the owner or manager of a place, or offer tips to airline personnel. (Porters are different; they are seldom employed by the airline.) If you are a guest in a household with servants, it is wise to consult the hostess before handing out money. Servants are hard to get these days and that helpful 'maid' may be a local housewife who is helping out on that particular occasion; she might well be upset by your action. Friends and acquaintances should never be offered money for doing you favours. And in countries where hospitality is a strong tradition, people may feel hurt if you appear to be judging a friendly act on a purely commercial basis. Visitors (especially Americans) often find this hard to understand. They are so used to the idea that everyone, everywhere, is engaged in a full-time conspiracy to extract as much cash from them as possible that they cannot see why local people should refuse financial rewards, even though they could do with the money. Perhaps, they reason, the amount wasn't big enough? Or they are too shy to accept cash from a stranger? The truth is usually much more simple: it isn't done to accept payment for acts of hospitality. Don't insist; it will only embarrass. If you must do something, offer a drink — it will be seen (and generally welcomed) as a gesture of friendship.

No, there's no extra charge for this chapter. I, too, have my pride.

CHAPTER SIX

MR. AND MRS. SMITH

THERE is, some businessmen insist, only one sure way of curing your wife of the notion that every trip is a mad romp. Take her with you.

The result, alas, is not always so predictable. Tactless hosts may suggest, in her presence, that you go to 'the *usual* night-club'. Female acquaintances may telephone, unaware that you are not alone. Hotel receptionists and restaurant managers may greet her like an old friend. There is, moreover, a very real risk that you will end up having a good time. In short, the experiment may not only confirm her suspicions, but also make her determined to be part of *all* your business travel.

A lot obviously depends on your personal relationship. If your marriage has reached the point where you can't be together for more than twenty minutes without quarrelling, it's asking for trouble to take her with you. Tempers can, and do, rise when one is travelling and hotel rooms, inevitably, are more cramped than one's own home. Nor are you likely to have much fun if she hates meeting people, or spends all her time wondering whether the children, left in the care of grandparents or neighbours, are getting enough to eat. Your irritability will almost certainly be reflected in your behaviour towards business associates, and your refusal to accept friendly social invitations may give unnecessary offence.

Many marriages benefit from occasional separations. HE welcomes the opportunity to escape from domestic routine, and enjoys his temporary 'freedom' so much that he finds no need for a more permanent break. SHE is able to arrange her day without regard for a demanding male who thinks the sole purpose of her existence is to serve HIM. She even gets to watch

her favourite TV programmes. Some women encourage their husbands to go away as much as possible, and I can't say I really blame them.

I happen to enjoy my wife's company, and she loves to travel. So we usually try to arrange joint trips. But we have a strict understanding that the work is shared: I take care of whatever business happens to be the purpose of the trip, and she looks after the usual travel chores — packing, paying bills, tipping porters, phoning airlines, making appointments, ordering breakfast, and booking tables at restaurants. Indeed, over the years she has become an indispensable aide — a combination of secretary, amateur physician, telephone operator, official family letter writer, diet expert, alarm-clock setter, sounding board, listening post, and sticky-situation handler. Women's Libbers may find this all wrong, but if *she* were going on a business trip, and decided to take me along, I would be quite content to see the roles reversed. Not that I would be half as efficient: wives do tend to be better at this sort of thing.

The arrangement has made me much more relaxed. We frequently extend our trips to include the weekend — and, in the process, see a lot of attractive places we would otherwise miss. And, of course, we meet many more people. 'Your wife is with you?' a business contact will say. 'Wait a minute while I ring mine. Perhaps we can get together this evening.' It's not always a blessing: some couples can be an awful bore and, occasionally, good wine and brandy lead to indiscretions. 'In strict confidence old boy', you say to your new friend, 'the firm's in a bit of trouble back home.' Or 'Don't pass this on, but we've got the great new idea — it'll make a fortune'. Wives, too, sometimes have an embarrassing urge to tell the truth and alcohol has an odd way of inducing rash promises. Next morning, sober again and conscious of how little you really know about your hosts, you wonder how you could have been so stupid.

More often than not, however, such evenings develop into pleasant (and profitable) relationships. They are also an excellent way of discovering those nice little restaurants where tourists are, as a rule, either unknown or unwelcome. People generally take pleasure in introducing guests to places they are proud of — and there is no law which says you can't go back afterwards. Robert McNamara, the peripatetic president of the

World Bank, always takes his wife on business trips because she is a shrewd judge of people. While he attends official functions — and goes on tours which are carefully designed to make a good impression — she slips off to markets, schools and hospitals, and talks to ordinary citizens. 'She brings back a lot of useful information,' says William Clark, one of McNamara's top aides. 'We tend to skim along the top when we are travelling. But she gets to see a lot of people and her views certainly influence her husband.'

There are, of course, countries where wives are expected to keep out of the way, and the visitor should not feel slighted or rejected if he is not asked to dine *en famille*. Though the purdah has been lifted in many parts of Asia and North Africa, for example, the inbred soragolio tradition prevails psychologically. It is the rule, rather than the exception, for men to go out alone — even (or perhaps especially) after office hours. In Japan, too, your host is quite likely to suggest that you forget all about the women. It's not merely that their proper place is thought to be the kitchen sink; he will insist that you can't possibly enjoy yourselves if wives are present. This has happened to me more than once. The Japanese set great store by business entertainment, and spend vast sums of money on it. Invitations to dine in their homes are comparatively rare: they much prefer to have a night out on the firm. If you insist on bringing your wife along they will nod politely, and make suitable arrangements. My own wife actually accompanied me, on one occasion, to a delightful (and needless to say, harmless) geisha party. But they will swiftly take up any hint that you may prefer to leave madam in her hotel room.

On the second of my three visits to Japan, I was taking part in an economic symposium in Tokyo. Our wives had been spirited away by theirs, to watch pearl fishers at work on an island some two hours' drive away. At the end of the day's deliberations, a group of Japanese suggested that I should join them for an evening in the Ginza, the city's famous nightclub district. I protested that my wife would soon be back, and expecting to join me. 'Oh,' they said, 'that's no problem. We'll take care of it. What time do you *want* her back?' A phone call to the island duly kept her — and the other wives — at a comfortable distance.

In India the hospitality is warm and friendly, and you are much more likely to be received at home. There is a shortage of good restaurants in cities like Bombay and Delhi and the drinking laws tend to put a damper on public entertainment. No matter; an evening in the home of a well-known businessman has a special charm. We have had the good fortune to be invited to a number of these occasions, and we remember them with great affection. The host was unfailingly courteous, the service impeccable, and the food as varied and exotic as one could wish. The wife and other female members of the family wore splendid saris — a fact which, predictably, made my own wife rush to the nearest dressmaker on the morning after. (At one dinner party I found, on arrival, that all the men were wearing white dinner jackets — despite the sweltering heat. No one had warned me, and I felt very much out of place in my lightweight suit. Beware!) The women were sophisticated and obviously well-read, but made a point of remaining in the background. The form, one gathered, was to let the man demonstrate that he was master in his own house. It is an attitude which the Germaine Greers and Kate Millets would find intolerable, and perhaps rightly so. We were not, after all, discussing business. But my wife wisely refrained from making any comment. It would have been impolite to launch into a long lecture on women's lib — and we certainly wouldn't have been asked again.

Events like this underline what is, perhaps, the most important factor in joint business travel: it gives you something to talk about back home. So many marriages grow tedious because the only shared experiences are repetitive and routine. Holidays provide a seasonal uplift, but there is no reason why it should not be extended.

Mind you, there are a few snags too. I have already mentioned the greater scope for argument; one possible solution to *that* is to take turns, with you having the right to complain on the odd days and her letting off steam on the even days. More serious is the virtual certainty that she will want to take far too much luggage. A man travelling on his own can make do with a few shirts, extra underwear, socks, a spare pair of shoes, and another suit. A woman will want to take her entire wardrobe, if you let her. It doesn't matter so much if you fly straight to your

destination, and stay there. But if you are on a tour of several countries (which, of course, will strengthen her resolve to take as much as possible) it will be a frightful drag. It means waiting at baggage counters for longer than anyone else — and finding that, when you have finally managed to collect every piece, all the taxis have gone. It means endless packing and unpacking. And if my own experience is anything to go by, it means that after a long and tiring flight you may find yourself compelled to carry the whole lot yourself because the porters have knocked off for the night, or because they are on strike. (In Italy this has become a regrettably common occurrence.) And at the end of the whole trip you will probably discover that she hasn't worn half the clothes she insisted on taking with her.

The answer, you might think, is to point out that it's a business trip, not a holiday. *Don't do it.* She will counter that business trips involve social occasions, and that she will simply have to take all sorts of evening dresses (plus, of course, the mink) as well as daytime clothes. If your itinerary includes two extremes of climate she will want to take a wardrobe for each. The more you argue, the more determined she becomes. My own approach is to take as little as possible myself; to make detailed enquiries about likely climatic conditions and encourage her to choose accordingly; to ask her to buy light, non-crease evening dresses and different kinds of blouses to go with one or two skirts; to claim that we won't have time for a lot of social functions; and to point out that, if extra clothes are needed, they can be bought on the spot.

The last ploy is generally the one which works best, but it carries a quite separate danger. While you are at your business meetings she is likely to be roaming around town, finding all sorts of things which you simply must take back with you. Those dear little carvings, that unique tableware, that splendid local jewellery, that lovely tapestry — how could anyone resist them? The people who sell this kind of stuff are trained to recognise that gleam in her eye: negotiations are invariably conducted with her, even if you happen to be present. Your function is to sign travellers' cheques. Government curbs on travel spending do, of course, provide a useful buffer. But they have become much less severe, and offer ample scope to a resolute female.

I have, so far, assumed that the lady with you is your wife. But there is clearly no point in pretending that this is always so. Businessmen *do* take other women with them on their trips. An American airline which offered free fares to accompanying wives sent out a questionnaire asking them how they enjoyed the experience. Most of the wives replied: 'What trip?' Some executives insist on being accompanied by their secretaries, and such relationships tend, more often than not, to be strictly professional. A businessman who has grown accustomed to being mothered by his middle-aged, single, over-protective secretary may feel helpless when he's suddenly faced with the prospect of having to cope with a heartless outside world. Occasionally, too, trips abroad are a reward for months of hard work. And, of course, a top man who has been invited to attend an important conference, and possibly to make a speech, will generally feel more comfortable if he has a competent assistant with him.

But secretary-boss relationships are not always that innocent. If the executive is single he will see nothing wrong in inviting an attractive secretary along — and presumably she wouldn't go unless she knew what to expect. It's her decision. Personally, I have always thought it rather foolish for anyone to play games with a secretary, if only because it is bound to affect all their subsequent dealings. You can't initiate a more intimate relationship and expect her to behave as if nothing has happened when you get back. Sometimes these things lead to marriage; more frequently, they end in an embarrassing row. Employers, certainly, don't like it.

The situation is worse in the case of married executives, and it usually pays to remember one basic rule: if you must play, don't do it with a subordinate. Much better to choose someone who has no link of any kind with the firm.

It isn't for me to make moral judgments, but there is no doubt that the world at large takes a much more lenient view of these things. Men don't hide their mistresses in back streets any more, and the concept of the 'fallen woman' has become ridiculous. There *are* still countries where hotel clerks demand to see your passports, and indignantly reject any attempt to book into one room. And it is, as a rule, bad form to flaunt your companion at social functions. It will embarrass people who have met your wife on previous occasions, and it will probably

annoy your hostess — who visualises her own husband doing the same when he travels abroad. Not least, there is a good chance that the news will get back to the office, and from there make its way to your home. On the whole, however, these things are nowadays much easier to arrange, and to carry through, than they were in the past.

Experienced philanderers take elaborate precautions against discovery, but even the most crass amateur should be aware of the more obvious pitfalls. Suspicious wives, for example, have a disconcerting habit of turning up at airports. And if you check into hotels as Mr. and Mrs., there is a very good chance that the receptionist or telephone operator will give the game away. 'Who do you wish to speak to?' he sweetly asks callers (including, of course, the wife) 'Mr. or Mrs. Smith?' Your hotel bill, too, will be made out to 'Mr. and Mrs.' — unless you have the good sense to ask, when you check in, that it should be in your name alone.

One rarely hears of female executives taking their boy friends along on business trips, but I suppose it happens. Women's Lib would certainly approve. There *she* is, conducting high-level business negotiations and being entertained at boozy expense account lunches in the best restaurants. There *he* is, waiting patiently in their hotel room, reading comics or watching old films on television. A most reassuring vision.

The merits of taking a paramour along on trips are, in many ways, much more apparent in the case of women than of men. Women travelling alone are, after all, exposed to all kinds of inconveniences. Restaurants and night clubs are often reluctant to admit them, and if they sit alone in a bar some of the male customers invariably get the wrong idea. Walking around at night is open to the same sort of misunderstanding — and, of course, in cities like New York it is positively dangerous.

But taking someone with you costs money. (I bet you thought I'd never get around to mentioning it.) Two fares are more expensive than one. A double room costs more than a single. Some airlines, eager to encourage joint travel, operate special schemes under which wives fly at a discount. B.E.A., for instance, introduced such a scheme in 1973. It offers a fifty per cent reduction in the normal all-year tourist round trip fare for wives accompanying their husbands — or, Women's Lib please

note, vice versa. There are a few qualifications about length of stay and the like, and it generally pays to check the details when you buy your ticket. But the move is welcome; my only complaint is that they should have done it years earlier.

An even better answer, of course, is for the company to foot the bill. In America this is much more readily accepted than it is in Europe: many firms recognise that such a gesture not only makes executives more willing to travel but is also good for business. In Europe companies still tend to feel that joint travel is something of a luxury — a present doled out to selected executives, once or twice a year, as a reward for faithful service or in lieu of an increase in salary. The recipients are generally expected to faint with gratitude. Fortunately this attitude is changing. One reason is that top management is getting more sophisticated. Another is the boom in conferences, or conventions as they are called in the U.S. Most are all-male occasions, but a growing number of executives take their wives along. In London, every third delegate brings a wife. Organisers frequently provide special 'ladies programmes' which, my own wife insists, are far more interesting than the long-winded proceedings inside the conference hall. They include guided tours to local sights, lunches, fashion shows, and shopping expeditions.

Some companies also try a bit of indoctrination. When Mutual of Omaha, America's largest insurance company, flew 800 executives and their wives to London for a convention, the gals (as the men insisted on calling them) saw a film about how they could help their husbands. On screen an interviewer talked to a Mutual salesman's pretty young wife. She explained how she met him when he was selling her a policy, and how she now helps him: 'Sometimes I'm on the 'phone from 10.30 to 11.30 and from 1.30 to 3.30 setting up appointments and talking to new customers for Elmer.' Next a coloured housewife told how she helps her husband by giving people Mutual book matches when they light a cigarette, and how she sends out birthday cards to policy holders and even to babies whose births rate a few lines in the local press. They're doing so well in just a few years, she says, the family is moving into a bigger, better house. To a chorus of 'gee — that's great — isn't that something' the film pans to the salesman's new house.

Some wives hate conventions, others love them. And, of course, there are *some* free evenings when husband and wife can be alone to sample the local nightlife.

'At night,' wrote Ovid in the *Art of Love*, 'there is no such thing as an ugly woman.' I hate to quarrel with a Latin lover, but he was talking nonsense. Perhaps it was the Roman lighting, or perhaps he was merely being gallant. I doubt if he would still hold the same opinion if he were to visit some of the night-spots in cities like Hamburg, Paris, Copenhagen and New York. One has to be blind, or drunk, to appreciate the female flesh they peddle in the name of entertainment.

Beauty, of course, is a matter of opinion. John Dryden thought that all heiresses were beautiful and I know many people who would readily agree with him. There are countries where they like women fat and countries where they like them thin. I don't much care for the Japanese geisha in her classic ginko leaf wig and thick coat of clown-white make-up, and I am aware that many Japanese visitors feel just the same about the Bunnies in the London Playboy Club.

What really turns me off, however, is not so much physical appearance (many night club hostesses are superficially attractive) but the hard, aggressive, cynical behaviour of most of the women one tends to meet in these establishments. Geishas do at least have femininity: they are experts in making a man feel witty, handsome, important, courteous, clever, and altogether irresistible to the opposite sex. They may despise the customer who insists in pouring out his life story, and they certainly know how to extract money from his pocket. But they do at least have a certain charm — which is more than can be said for the girls (if that is the right word) employed by Western clip joints.

Travelling businessmen, alas, tend to be easy game. They are eager, gullible, and generally well supplied with funds. They want to play, but they don't know the rules. They happily accept the advice of a friendly sounding taxi driver, unaware that the club he recommends so warmly will pay him a bounty for each victim he delivers to its door. They trust the warm, welcoming smile of the hostess and, within minutes, tell her all kinds of company secrets while she keeps ordering more bottles

of expensive champagne. (At least that's what she says it is.) A banker I know once found himself presented, after three hours with one of these thirsty ladies, with a bill for *five* bottles of champagne at £10 each. He protested that they couldn't possibly have consumed all that. 'If we had,' he pointed out with, one would have thought, irrefutable logic 'she would be dead drunk. Look at her. Just look at her. Sober as a judge.' Irrefutable or not, he paid up to avoid trouble. The possibility of blackmail, on top of the bill, rarely seems to occur to executives who normally pride themselves on their judgment. And what does the tired businessman get in return? A chat with a professional companion who pretends to show interest in his boring, boastful tales and who decimates his wallet with hints of untold delights which, somehow, seldom materialise. He also gets a Show, which may mean anything from a desultory striptease by a woman old enough to be his mother to a dolly-laden spectacular.

In some European cities he may be taken in by old tricks, like the key swindle. A hostess will slip him the alleged key to her flat on deposit of a cash sum 'for good faith'. When he arrives it's either a false address or she never shows up. In Tokyo they operate a variety of systems, with lots of hidden charges to surprise the visitor, and you may even stumble into a 'gay bar', in which the bartenders and waiters are men in drag. They look and sound convincing, and the evening may end with a double shock — the discovery that you have been duped, *and* the bill.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not a prude, and I know there are a lot of night clubs which give reasonable value for money. I have enjoyed myself hugely in many of these places — often in the company of my wife. They generally offered cabarets with talented local entertainers. (There was that marvellous belly dancer in Cairo, and that superb limbo dancer in Nassau, and . . . but you no doubt have your own list.) The entrance fee was clearly stated, and so were the bar prices. I wasn't pushed into ordering anything I didn't want. There was a good dance floor and a reasonable menu, even at 1.00 a.m.

It isn't hard to find such places on a business trip. And if one wants something livelier there are usually a few good discotheques where one can meet the opposite sex on a strictly

non-professional basis. If you do get lured into a clip joint try at least to remember a few basic precautions: demand the wine list or bar card wherever you go, take a box of matches or lighter with you so that you can read it even in the dimmest corner, ask for the price before you let a hostess take a seat at your table and drink your health, insist on paying after each drink, and stick to small talk. Don't worry about sounding mean — they may sneer but at least they won't take you for another mug.

Bangkok probably houses more prostitutes than any other capital in the world, and I know businessmen who make a point of stopping over on the way to Tokyo or Sydney just to sample the local talent. In some Chinese parts of the city there are whole streets of phoney hotels containing up to a hundred girls each, many of whom are virtually prisoners. The Thai police, one gathers, are kept at bay by a universal system of monthly pay-offs. The only thing they insist on is that the girls have weekly check-ups at the clinics; they are issued with cards certifying them 'clean'. The prostitution industry extends to other cities — brothels in Thailand are almost as common as pubs in England — and most of the girls are young, attractive, and comparatively inexpensive.

Hongkong is another popular sleep-over. The ladies there are grouped under three main headings — escorts and hostesses, bar girls, and prostitutes. A girl can fit under one, several or all categories at the same time, and some slide from group to group as their personal fortunes require. The visitor has, so to speak, to feel his way along. Suzie Wong never really existed but there is no shortage of Suzie bars — complete with hostesses who can be just as rapacious as their European or North American sisters. Hongkong also has its formal brothels and massage parlours: your taxi driver will know the way.

Sometimes, of course, one meets an attractive girl on the plane. It isn't difficult to arrange (watch as she chooses her seat at the gate and ask for the one next to hers) and it is even easier to get into conversation. Travelling to an unfamiliar destination is a lonely business and offers of help at the other end (followed, of course, by an invitation to dinner) may be gratefully accepted. But there is one basic rule which should be

observed without fail: don't make a nuisance of yourself. If she says no, assume she means no. Her husband may be waiting at the airport, or she may not like the shape of your nose. (It happens.) She has every right to call the chief steward and complain.

The same goes for air hostesses, stewardesses, or whatever they may be called. Many airlines use their prettier girls in press and T.V. advertising, and it isn't difficult to see why. A little glamour, a touch of gloss, helps to distinguish one airline from another. But there is an obvious risk that the sales message will be misunderstood. The risk is enhanced by racy paperbacks like *Coffee, Tea, or Me?*, allegedly written by a bevy of sexy American stewardesses. That well-groomed blonde heating steaks in the galley, or cooling your champagne, *may* be dreaming of adventure. She may enjoy a little flirtation on what is, to her, a long and tedious trip. She may even hand over her telephone number. Two of my friends are married to girls they met on flights to New York. But don't mistake politeness for sexual interest, and don't prevent her from doing her busy job. There is nothing in airline regulations which says that stewardesses have to welcome the attention of amorous male passengers.

Night life becomes much simpler, of course, when you are taken out by a local representative or business contact. He will usually know the right places and he will not only speak the local language (a considerable help) but also be familiar with local laws and customs. He may even be able to fix up a foursome — a much more pleasant arrangement than an evening's uncertain forage. If he cannot make it himself, he should at least be able to offer more reliable advice than that friendly taxi driver. And his secretary may have a friend who would like nothing more than a cheerful night out. (Stay clear, if possible, of secretaries themselves. You usually end up talking shop, and giving away more than is good for business.) I met my own wife in this way. She was working for the World Bank in Washington and I was there to make a film for the BBC. My producer's secretary had a friend who, she said, badly needed a bit of fun and the four of us went out to dinner and, later to a discotheque. We danced and flirted, and the next day the producer and I flew back to England. But we met again, in London

and in Washington, and a few months after that first evening we were married.

I confess that, for me, the most enjoyable evenings on a business trip are those spent with friends in a really good restaurant. By good I don't mean pretentious places with grand decor, ostentatious menu, and an atmosphere so formal that conversation is not allowed to rise above a whisper. They make me feel distinctly uncomfortable and I try to avoid them as much as possible. Show me a small restaurant where everyone is relaxed, where the decor is informal without being vulgar, where the food is cooked with pride, where the wine is so carefully selected by the proprietor that the label is immaterial, and where one can laugh without getting disapproving glances from one's fellow diners — show me a restaurant like that, and I am happy.

Paris, of course, is still the best-known (and probably the best) city for lovers of good food and wine. There are countless places where, despite the much publicised aloofness of the Parisians, the visitor can feel instantly at home. But London, nowadays, offers just as much scope. English cooking may not compare with that of France but that, in a way, has proved a blessing. We have simply imported the best from all around the world. There are French restaurants in Britain which match anything (well, almost anything) Paris has to offer and the Italian food is often better than it is in Italy. If you like Chinese, Japanese, or Indian cooking we are way ahead of the conservative French. New York apart, it is difficult to think of a capital which is more cosmopolitan.

First-time visitors usually express a wish to go to a typically British restaurant (just as we ask for a typically French or German place) and it won't really do to take them to the local fish and chip shop. There are, fortunately, a few places which should satisfy even the most ardent fan. Flanagan's, for example, will give you floors covered with sawdust, English handmaidens, Irish stew, and a jolly pianist who insists on having customers join him in a noisy rendering of *Molly Malone.* There is also the Tudor Grill at the Kensington Hilton, which runs special weekly medieval banquets — with starters like *Newe-made brawne* or *Deyntees of ̀mete,* then *Thikke soup of greene peese with gobbets of smokked hamme*

porke, followed by *Rooste ribbes of Angus beefe* with *sondry fresshe tendre crops* and so on. To drink there is either mead, country ale or red wine and if you think it's rather curious to eat medieval food in twentieth-century clothes, don't worry. Each guest on arrival is offered a colourful frock to wear. Typically British? Not bloody likely. But it will probably delight your visitor all the same.

He will also be most grateful if you can manage to invite him along to one of the more exclusive clubs, such as the Athenaeum, or if you can take him to one of the extraordinary guild dinners in the City. There is nothing more pleasing to an American, or German, or Japanese than to witness eccentric Englishmen going through their mysterious rituals.

A cheaper and probably no less effective gambit is to take him to a pub. Not the average High Street place, with its brown ceiling and dilapidated imitation leather chairs, nor the refurbished, modernised establishment with its American-made pin-tables and fruit machines. No — show him Henekey's Wine Bar in Holborn, or The George near London Bridge, or The Prospect of Whitby on the Isle of Dogs. It will be full of other foreigners, but with luck he won't notice.

Which brings me, in an oblique sort of way, to a subject which is perhaps of greater importance to the business traveller than any other. I am, of course, referring to the bottle. Alcohol. The 'source of increased happiness and decreased hostilities', according to Dr. Karl Menninger, and the 'enemy that steals away your brains' according to Shakespeare.

Drinking and business trips are as inseparable as Siamese twins. The teetotaller has a hard time because no one really believes that he is serious. His apologetic refusal is seen as an open challenge to one's powers of persuasion. 'Oh come now,' the host says. 'A *little* one won't hurt you.' Many people feel uneasy in the company of someone who is obviously not indulging along with them: it looks so much like disapproval. There are, of course, exceptions. Alcohol is seldom if ever served in a devout Moslem household. And cities like Bombay have been 'dry' for years. Prohibition was introduced, along with ration books, as soon as the British left. But businessmen pride themselves on being able to supply what is not generally available. There is a thriving black market — supported, in large

measure, by the army which gets special rations to 'keep up its strength'. I like the story of the member of the Prohibition League who was caught drinking scotch. His friends were horried. How could he? 'I am,' he told them, 'drinking this in my personal capacity.' If you really don't like alcohol, or your doctor is concerned about your liver, the best strategy is to say as little as possible. Don't go in for long explanations and don't preach. Ask for a tomato juice and pretend it is a Bloody Mary, and remember that any clear spirit looks like water. The Gibson, a dry martini with a pearl onion in it on a stick, is said to have been named after a certain American ambassador who was teetotal. To avoid embarrassment at diplomatic cocktail parties Gibson put an onion in a glass of water and carried it around with him. An olive will do just as well — and taste better.

Most businessmen are far from teetotal, and the chances are that you, dear reader, are an expert drinker. I won't pick a fight with you, but I would like to offer a few thoughts. First an African proverb: 'When the cock is drunk, he forgets about the hawk.' Next, Horace: 'What does drunkenness not accomplish? It unlocks secrets, confirms our hopes, urges the indolent into battle, lifts the burden from anxious minds, teaches new arts.' Which proves nothing except that, when it comes to the bottle, there is room for more than one opinion.

I'm a wine drinker myself, and I adore champagne — which, of course is at its best around noon. I can't speak for others but I have always found it a splendid ice-breaker. People one meets for the first time are often ill at ease, particularly if they happen to be far away from home and unfamiliar with one's language. A bottle of champagne helps to relax them and establish some rapport. I dare say a double Scotch has the same effect. Anything will do, I suppose, as long as it has the required effect.

The Germans tend to go for beer and schnapps, the French for wine, the British for Scotch and gin, the Russians for vodka, the West Indians for rum, and the Japanese for almost anything. Like the Russians most Japanese have no idea when to stop. While sober, they are generally serious and reserved. When drunk they throw off all their reserve. A drunken Japanese is the happiest, most boisterous man alive. He sings, he dances, he tells jokes, and he plays silly games. No party is

considered a success until all the guests are thoroughly stoned.

The German tackles drinking with the same energy and determination he devotes to making cars or machine tools, and the Frenchman — God bless him — seldom has to be reminded that a second bottle would not be unwelcome. The Russian drinks because vodka is freely available and because it takes at least half an hour, in any Moscow or Leningrad restaurant, before a waiter even deigns to acknowledge your existence.

On my last visit to Moscow a couple of strangers joined my table, as is the usual custom. There was a bottle of vodka on the table and the three of us proceeded to empty it while we waited for the menu. For the first fifteen minutes (or half bottle) nothing was said, but they eyed me curiously. Then one of them pointed to my longish hair, raised his glass, and said in a loud voice: 'George Best.' I nodded foolishly, and reflected on the somewhat embarrassing fact that I not only knew very little Russian but that I could not name a single member of the famous Dynamo football team. Undeterred, the other Russian raised *his* glass and announced 'Bobby Moore'. We got through the rest of the bottle, and another, on those few words and I regret, to this day, that I have never quite got around to expressing my gratitude to those two British lads.

America, as far as I can make out after dozens of trips to that exciting country, runs largely on martini. American businessmen have an extraordinary capacity for this legendary cocktail — the mainstay of that splendid invention, the Happy Hour. The mixing of this drink has inflamed more passions than any other. Its classic story (there are several versions, but no matter) concerns the platoon of American Marines who were to be dropped on the North Pole to have their endurance tested to the limit. Came kit inspection, and the Colonel saw that in Private Murphy's bedroll was a bottle of gin, a bottle of vermouth, and a mixing jar. Said Murphy: 'I figure it this way, Colonel. If I'm cut off from the rest of the platoon in a blizzard I'll sit down and chip some ice and, sure as hell, there's bound to be somebody turn up and say "That's no way to make a martini".'

I don't pretend to be an expert on this noble art (which immediately distinguishes me from millions of Americans) but I do know that a really good dry martini packs a lethal punch. I

also know that the most unworthy thing a host can do is to make dry martinis in big batches and then let the ice melt. It forces his guests to make merry on gin-scented water and, one gathers, makes such a bad impression that a multi-million dollar deal may be lost forever. So remember: this most hallowed of all cocktails must be made a batch at a time, in clear view, with a ratio of five to one gin and Noilly Prat, and the remaining ice thrown out. And stirred, not shaken, for fear of bruising the gin.

Even if you get the martini right, of course, you may have difficulty in coping with the extraordinary range of lesser drinks which grace the Happy Hour. Accustomed to simple concoctions like gin and tonic, scotch and water, and rum and coke, the English visitor tends to look confused and embarrassed when confronted by exotic names like Kremlin Colonel, Polish Sidecar, Flying Grasshopper. Then there is the delicate matter of aphrodisiacs. The search for a substance that either arouses sexual desire in another or enhances one's own sexual powers is as old as recorded history, and in New York you may be offered such enticing items as Indian Love Powder, Cleopatra Oil, and Hi John the Conqueror Root. 'Just slip this into her drink' your helpful companion will assure you with a leer. It makes a change, to be sure, from powdered rhinoceros horn, reindeer antler and Korean ginseng root, but I'm afraid the experts say that none of these potions are much good. The best that can be said for them is that they are generally harmless — and that they *can* produce the desired effect if the user believes it will work. In other words, it's a state of mind rather than of body. Drugs like marijuana and hashish are thought to have aphrodisiac qualities, but there is evidence that in many people they actually reduce sexual desire. On the one hand, they tend to relax inhibitions; on the other, they may anaesthetize the genitalia, cause nausea, or put people to sleep. Halluncinatory drugs like LSD can sometimes open new dimensions, but they can just as easily cause impotence.

I realise that this, like most of the contents of this chapter qualifies as a controversial statement and that I ought, perhaps, to make amends. But I think I'll risk a few more generalisations. Drink is dangerous; it has wrecked more reputations than divorce. Drink is used to secure indiscretions; *in vino veritas.* Drink is both a curse and an ally; 'over a bottle many a

friend is found'. The right executive strategy is childishly simple. Always stop one glass short of Enough. If you must get drunk do it in private. And never try to outdo your host; he'll be angry the next morning.

Ah yes, the morning. There is an encouragingly wide range of hangover cures and since it is the aim of this book to make business travel more pleasant it seems appropriate to list at least a few of them. The easiest way out is to drown yourself. The next, according to my good friend Vincent Mulchrone, is to go to the nearest pub, flop into the chair nearest to the fresh air, and hold up three fingers. It is a small blasphemy known as the trinity — from left to right a Fernet Branca, a glass of water, and a half bottle of Laurent Perrier. At this moment, one of two things happens. At worst, you're glad you chose the chair next to the door. Or you're over your hangover. Better-known remedies include the heart-starter (a large measure of gin, a cup of iced water, and a teaspoonful of Andrews' Liver Salts, tossed down like the first drink of the week), the Prairie Oyster (one tot of brandy, a teaspoonful each of vinegar and Worcester Sauce, a dash of red pepper, poured over the yolk of an egg and transferred to the mouth without breaking the yolk before it comes into contact with the palate), and the aptly named corpse reviver (one measure each of cognac, Fernet Branca, and white creme de menthe).

Doctors, I should add, claim that you'd do better with large amounts of ascorbic acid — Vitamin C — and honey. But they are generally agreed that the only cure which really works is time. You can try to speed the process by taking one of the aforementioned remedies, lie down or sit up, take long walks or cold showers, or buy an icebag. You can defer the problem by going straight into the next drinking bout. You can try to attempt to oxidise the alcohol by getting socked in a bar-room fight. But the best way is still to — well, hang on.

Coffee, contrary to popular belief, doesn't do the trick. As Dr. Leon Greenberg, a realist from Rutgers University, New Jersey puts it: 'The fact that black coffee appears to have a sobering effect doesn't mean that it hastens the removal of alcohol from the body. As a stimulant it counteracts some of the depressant action of the alcohol on the brain. But, awake or asleep, the man is drunk.'

Like all the other gentlemen, Dr. Greenberg observes that prevention is better than any cure. Milk, cream and oil are said to slow up the intake of alcohol — but, on the other hand, you may end up drinking more and have an even worse hangover. Mixing drinks doesn't present any hidden hazards (what counts is the amount of alcohol consumed within a period, not the way it's distilled) but bubbles in fizzy soda make the substance go to the duodenum more quickly.

But let us end this saga on a happy note. A survey produced by a Californian group of experts of 1973 showed that social drinkers are less prone to heart attacks than teetotallers. Cheers.

CHAPTER SEVEN

KEEPING IN TOUCH

FOURTEEN digits, a sequence of clunk-peep-chink-burp-brr, a ringing tone — and you are through from London to New York. That, at least, is the theory. It doesn't always work out that way, as we shall see, but there is no doubt that keeping in touch with the office is easier today than it has ever been before. No more carrier pigeons, no more couriers taking months to reach their destinations with important news. Less than 160 years ago, it took three days for the news of Napoleon's shattering defeat at Waterloo to get to London — and then only through a garbled account in a Dutch newspaper which the Prime Minister, among others, refused to believe. Nathan Rothschild is said to have made a fortune out of the confusion. An agent brought over a copy of the paper and, so the story goes, Rothschild withheld the good news from the Cabinet until early afternoon, standing by his accustomed pillar in the Stock Exchange throughout the morning with a glum face and buying up the funds which he had deceitfully depressed. True, or not, men like Rothschild certainly went to great trouble and expense to secure information. Modern business has telex, cables, TV, fast planes, and the telephone. There is no excuse for the executive who fails to keep in touch.

Well, yes there is. Have you ever tried phoning London or New York from Madrid, Lisbon and — God help you — Rio de Janeiro? It can take up the entire day. You sit in your hotel room, staring at the telephone, waiting for the ring that will connect you with the familiar world you've left behind. Nothing happens. Your irritation mounts; the wretched instrument begins to look like an enemy. The hotel operator is bland; if you persist, he pretends not to understand you. Marshall

McLuhan was right when he described communications networks as 'extensions of our physical and nervous system'. At the end of a trying experience like this some people are close to a nervous breakdown. And it's far more common than is generally realised.

There is a rule of thumb that the most attractive places on earth have the worst telephone service — and vice versa. In Switzerland, the things run like well-oiled cuckoo clocks. By comparison the Latin countries never seem really to have mastered the technique. It has twice been my misfortune to go to Brazil as a journalist, working to deadlines for a daily newspaper. The trip would have been most enjoyable if I had been in any other kind of job — or if I had been on holiday. Alas, I had to write. Telex messages arrived so garbled that they might have been in another language; calls placed early in the afternoon finally came through in the middle of the night. Everyone was being very charming about it, of course, but it was a totally frustrating experience. Italy is almost as bad; it can take hours even to get through to a nearby city.

But Latin countries are by no means alone. Capitals like Moscow and Paris are notorious for their inefficiency. I once rather foolishly committed myself to write a series of daily articles from Moscow, for the London *Evening Standard*. Before leaving, I had arranged to phone my copy to the office each day — a common practise with foreign correspondents. (National newspapers maintain a team of copy-takers, who will either take down the whole article or story in short-hand, simultaneously recording it for check-back, or take dictation straight into a typewriter.) Interviewing the people I wanted to see turned out to be surprisingly easy, but communication with London was something else. After waiting — and fuming — for eight hours on the first day I asked the resident correspondent of a leading British paper how he coped with the problem. He told me about a piece of subterfuge known as The Wilson Call. His office, it appeared, had devised a means of securing immediate contact by inventing a man called Wilson. It kept a permanent call in for this fictitious gentleman, at the number of my friend. In normal circumstances, he was never there. But if my friend wanted to talk urgently to London, he simply picked up the phone and asked: 'Do you have a call for Mr. Wilson?'

The operator looked at her list, saw the name, and as the call had obviously been placed hours ago — thereby assuring a spot at, or close to the top of the queue — he was put through more or less at once. I tried it myself, and it worked perfectly.

Comparing phone horror stories has become a favourite European pastime. At the Common Market headquarters in Brussels, exasperated officials will tell you that it's easier to call a maiden aunt in Wisconsin than the Foreign Office in London or Rome. And everyone knows about the waiting lists; it seems we are lucky to have phones at all. *Fortune* magazine sees the European telephone situation like this:

> Lots of these maddening experiences can be traced back to the fact that all the phone companies in Europe are state-owned. They are all run by bureaucrats rather than managers, and they treat people who want phones like petitioners, not customers. Planning is generally poor. Future needs are for ever underestimated. Obsolete mechanical equipment is patched up and maintained, instead of being junked in favour of more modern electronic items. The automatic system is invariably overloaded during working hours.

The United States, of course, boasts of more telephones per capita than anyone else. And except for Canadians, no other people use their telephones as much as Americans. Most businessmen visiting the U.S. for the first time are delighted with the speed and efficiency of the telephone service. But even there, complaints are mounting. Pierre Salinger, former press secretary to John F. Kennedy, tells what must surely rank as the greatest horror story of all. 'Early one morning in 1961,' he says, 'the President was in his bedroom when a special, top-secret telephone began to ring. A direct line between the President and the strategic air force bomber and missile commands, the phone was to be used only in the event of an impending attack. Kennedy, expecting the worst, picked up the receiver.

'This is the President,' he said. There was a pause.

'I must have the wrong number,' came the startled voice at the other end. 'I'm trying to reach a French laundry.'

White House communications experts, says Salinger, swarmed over the equipment for several weeks, but could never

discover where the call had come from, or how it had wound up on that vital telephone line.

I travel a great deal in the United States, and I generally talk to my office two or three times a week while I'm doing so. I have even made BBC broadcasts from bedside telephones in California. Perhaps I've been lucky, but I have never had any serious problems. People back home do, however, have one disconcerting habit: they tend to forget about the time difference. There is, for most of the year, an eight-hour gap between London and Los Angeles, so you are liable to find yourself woken up, at 3.00 a.m., by a cheerful secretarial voice announcing: 'Hold on, Mr. Jones is on the line.' The natural reaction is to tell Mr. Jones what he can do with his wretched line, but if he happens to be your boss it may be better to listen, grunt, and gently explain that you are not at your best in the middle of the night. The most effective solution, I have found, is to give the hotel operator strict instructions, before you retire, that no calls are to be put through to your room until a certain hour of the morning.

In some of the aforementioned countries you may, of course, be glad that the call has come through at all. Take it while you can! It may be days before they succeed in reaching you again. If I know that I'm going somewhere where telephoning is difficult, I generally arrange to have the home number of a close colleague, and that of my secretary, with me. If I can't get them during office hours, and the call is important, I try again during the evening or at weekends, when the lines are less likely to be overloaded. Such arrangements should not be abused (even secretaries are entitled to some privacy) but they provide a useful alternative.

The trouble with keeping in touch is that, because modern communications are thought to be so easy, people expect you to do it all the time. Wives are particularly inclined to underestimate the difficulties. Long delays in getting through your 'good night' call may deprive you of badly needed sleep. And persistent secretaries who insist on bothering you with every detail can cause no end of havoc. Few things are more confusing than to return to your hotel, after a busy afternoon, to be told that 'your secretary has been trying to get you all day'. You start to speculate what it might have been about. Obviously it

must have been urgent. Has the Board had second thoughts about the terms? Is there some new and vital piece of news which might affect tomorrow's negotiations? Has something happened which needed a personal, immediate decision? Or perhaps it isn't an office matter at all — has one of the children fallen ill?

Competent secretaries will leave a message, but even that doesn't guarantee better understanding. Operators whose own language is not English may mis-hear her words, especially if the line is bad, and what they jot down on a message pad may bear little relation to what was actually said. Worse, it may give the opposite impression to the one intended. You'd be surprised, for example, how easily the word 'unimportant' turns into 'important', and vice versa. The very brevity of messages, moreover, leaves scope for misunderstanding. 'Child ill' doesn't answer obvious questions like 'How serious is it? Does the doctor think I should be there?'

A good deal of all this can be avoided if your secretary is properly briefed before you leave. If you are the kind of man who finds it impossible to delegate, and insists on knowing everything that goes on in his absence, you can hardly blame her for bombarding you with calls, letters, and cables. If, however, you want to be free to concentrate on whatever business takes you overseas, it's best to work out some sort of system. Pre-arranged phone calls, twice a week, are generally enough to keep you aware of developments. And there is much to be said for maintaining all other contact, as far as possible, through telex.

Telex, as far as I am concerned, is the business traveller's best friend. It is a splendid extension of the telephone service, and rightly enjoys a rapidly growing popularity throughout the world. Major hotels usually have a telex machine, and so do many of the larger business firms. In any case, there is usually a telex centre somewhere in the city you are visiting. One way or another, then, you have a direct link to the machine in your own office. If your secretary wants to get in touch, she can telex a lengthy and explicit message to the hotel — and you can, if you wish, hand in your equally detailed reply. The operator will usually give you a copy of what she has transmitted, so you have both a means of checking and a permanent record. You

don't have to hang around in your hotel room, waiting for the phone to ring, and you don't have to spend your evenings wondering what on earth that office message meant. You can even hold a conversation by telex: an open line enables operators at both ends to have a question-and-answer session.

Newspapers leave their machines switched on throughout the night, so that correspondents can telex at any time, from wherever they happen to be. I once sent a long piece from San Francisco to *The Guardian* in London, and because I was working very close to a deadline I was anxious for some sort of acknowledgment. It was 2.00 a.m. locally (the telex centre operates round the clock) but already 10.00 a.m. at home, so it seemed reasonable to expect that a colleague would be on the spot, watching the eagerly awaited words coming across at high speed. We kept tapping out the usual request:

HOW RECEIVED PLEASE?

No answer. The operator tried again.

HELLO GUARDIAN ARE U THERE PLEASE?

Still no answer. He tried a third time, and a fourth. Finally there was a reluctant reply:

ONLY CLEANER HERE XXTRY AGAIN LQTER

Like most journalists, I always carry an assortment of credit cards for telex and cables, because that way the bill goes directly to the office at a later date. I.T.T. and Cable and Wireless cards will see you through almost anywhere in the world. At hotels, I generally ask for the cost to be put on the bill — and pay by American Express card. The average businessman, of course, does not send thousand-word articles, but it's always useful to have at least one credit card in reserve.

If your office isn't equipped with a telex machine (how *can* you be so old fashioned?) cabling is an obvious alternative. The trouble with cables is that you have no guarantee that they have actually arrived. It's unusual for cables to get lost, or delivered to the wrong address, but it certainly happens. Cables *from* the office sometimes suffer from another snag: they are brief to the

point of ambiguity. This may be because the operator at your end isn't good at languages, but the more likely cause is that cost-conscious secretaries feel compelled to make do with as few words as possible. As with telephone messages, this may raise all sorts of unanswered questions. She may also fancy herself as an expert at cable-ese, an art which consists of using words like Soonest (no problem there) and stringing others together (risky in the hands of non-experts). If you have the kind of mutual understanding which makes it easy to guess each other's thoughts, there is no reason why you shouldn't try to save a little money. You should certainly know how to avoid the use of unnecessary words. But as a general rule, clarity should come before everything else — and it's a good idea to tell her so.

Among new (or rather extended) means of communication is the mobile telephone. You can phone your hotel or business associate from, say, the express train between Tokyo and Osaka, or the Paris–Lille Express, or from the boats on the Rhine, the Seine, and the Moselle. Better still, you can call him from your car. A long-distance call from a traffic jam in Washington or Chicago must surely rate as one of the things which any businessman would find quite irresistible.

Other devices include that Orwellian phenomenon, the picture-phone. Already available between specified points in New York, Chicago and Washington, it enables you to see the person you are talking to — and vice versa. The system, developed by Bell, operates on the same principle as the telephone or ordinary television set. After you depress the 'on' button and hear the dial tone, you dial the necessary telephone digits. When you are connected, you can adjust the knobs on the control pad for the desired volume and picture clarity. You can also zoom in on the other person's face, and catch every nuance of his expression.

The possibilities are considerable and, you may feel, frightening. Not only will you be exposed to view — what you look like, how you dress — but even the interior of your office will show, probably revealing a good deal about your tastes and status. If you feel off-colour, or harrassed, it will make a bad impression. If you are evasive, the other person will be able to tell. If the device catches on, we shall no doubt have training

courses which teach executives how to behave on the picture-phone: they already exist for television.

The developers naturally insist that the system has no similarity to the Big Brother concept, and claim that it offers considerable advantages. Executives can establish and maintain more personal links than is possible by ordinary telephone. And an employer can see the man he is hiring. Frankly, the whole project fills me with suspicion.

Fortunately there is little risk that picture-phones will ever be installed in hotel bedrooms. Imagine being caught bleary-eyed, unshaven, and literally with your pants down. Or dripping wet. Or in what some people still like to call 'a delicate situation'. The phone service does, however, provide one additional amenity which deserves an honourable mention — if only because it can be highly entertaining as well as useful. I refer to the telephone directory.

American telephone directories are more helpful, more alive, more informative, more chatty than our own. Some of them are willing to interrupt the listing of dull names to bang the drum of patriotism. Thus, on page 181 of the Detroit Yellow Pages, you will find in full the stirring words of *The Star-Spangled Banner*; and in case you should forget them, they are reprinted on pages 742, 1169, and 1427. There are also four separate entries setting out the National Flag Code ('Fly no flag above it . . . Raise it briskly, lower it slowly . . . Never cover a speaker's desk with it, but hang it behind him . . . on a casket the blue union should be over the left shoulder of the honoured dead; it must not be lowered into the grave . . .'). When you have absorbed that, there is advice on what to do in tornados ('if you are at home, take best shelter — usually south-west corner of the basement') and on the best way to thicken gravies and pan-fry fish. You will also be able to compare the average gestation periods of the wolf and the rhinoceros and to check the dates of average killing frost.

Rather oddly, the Detroit directory omits to print the precautions against nuclear attack. For these one turns confidently to the Oahu (Honolulu) volume, which urges its readers to lie flat close to the wall, without even seeking out the south-west corner. But nuclear holocaust is only one of the hazards you may encounter in Oahu. There are abominations called *tsu-*

namis, or tidal waves. No problem — the phone book will tell you how to cope. For any other difficulties, ring the 'Suicide and Crisis Center'.

Every American directory lists helpful excerpts from the law on telephones. It is an offence, not only to use lascivious language, but to employ the instrument to harrass, annoy, torment, abuse, threaten, or intimidate another. It is also an offence to make silent calls. Nothing, I'm afraid, is laid down about heavy breathing and it's not clear at what point 'annoyance' and 'abuse' becomes illegal. The visitor just has to muddle through as best he can.

CHAPTER EIGHT

JUST A LITTLE SOMETHING

If you want to win the friendship — or at least esteem — of David Rockefeller, president of the Chase Manhattan Bank, you could do worse than to give him a beetle. Not your ordinary little pest, of course, but one of those splendid little scarabs made by the ancient Egyptians, to whom dung-beetles were sacred. Rockefeller loves them. He already has 30,000 but I don't think he would say no to more. He also collects abstract oils, Greek vases and other antiquities, but I wouldn't advise turning up at his New York office with a Picasso or a Mogul incense burner. He might feel you were overdoing it.

Most people like getting gifts, even if they protest that you shouldn't have done it. Businessmen are no exception, but this is an area which, in practice, is a good deal more complex than it appears. The wrong approach can do more harm than good. In some countries people would take offence if your arrived empty-handed; in others they would be no less offended if you turned up looking like one of those traders who bought Manhattan from the Indians for a few bottles of booze and a dozen strings of beads. Some companies forbid all employees to accept gifts of any kind from any individual or company with whom they do business. And, of course, most countries have laws which could land the well-meaning but clumsy traveller in gaol.

I generally take books which have pleased me, or which I think will give pleasure to people I am likely to meet abroad. It makes it a personal expression and in no way looks like a bribe. But don't, I beg you, give books with titles like *How to be an Effective Executive* or *Everything you have always wanted to*

know about salesmanship. Stick to subjects like golf or history.

Some people prefer to wait until after the visit to send their tokens of appreciation, and indeed this has the twin merits of allowing you to travel lightly and discovering more about the other fellow's interests. One can always visit the local store or bookshop, or send out some appropriate gift on one's return.

In countries like America the designing, manufacturing and promotion of executive gifts is big business. Many department stores and men's speciality shops have executive gift departments and often employ gift counsellors to advise people who are confused or indecisive. Much of their trade is done at Christmas, but help is available all the year round.

Choosing a suitable gift for a man-who-has-everything is far from easy. Books may be inadequate if you are trying to squeeze a multi-million contract out of someone who is used to lavish treatment; an Arab oil sheik, for example, might well decide that you are not worthy of his personal attention. The exercise is simpler if, like Rockefeller, your intended business partner has a hobby. The last managing director of the International Monetary Fund, Pierre Paul Schweitzer, was mad about tortoises — from modest imitations, like the brass Eiffel Towers people bring home from Paris, to elaborate models in silver and gold. The late Jack Cotton, who made millions out of property, used to collect bottles, and another millionaire of my acquaintance has a thing about biscuit tins.

Discreet enquiries among aides will generally tell you all you need to know. So will a visit to his home if you are lucky enough to be invited. But if you start cold, you may like to hear how monarchs, presidents, prime ministers, and other public figures tackle this particular problem.

When Richard Nixon sought to woo Leonid Brezhnev he pandered to the Soviet leader's well-known love of cars. He sent him a Cadillac. Willy Brandt later tried to match this by despatching a Mercedes; Brezhnev still drives both. Occasionally statesmen try to make do with signed photographs of themselves, or with some plaque or inscribed teapot. British ministers who go on missions abroad may draw gifts from an official Whitehall pool, which consists largely of trinkets handed to their predecessors on earlier trips.

Next to American presidents (and quite possibly ahead of

them) the biggest recipient of largesse is the Queen. Her presence on foreign soil, however brief, is invariably a signal for gifts to swarm in on her like flies on a jam sandwich. After the Queen's Canadian junket in 1959, the royal yacht *Britannia* groaned her way home under the weight of four hundred items including a pair of snow shoes, a £5,000 mink coat, a chunk of iron ore, a sixty-pound statue of a bucking bronco, a sackful of spears and polo sticks, a fifteen-foot-long motor boat, a silver maple-syrup jug and a painting of a power station. In Recife, Brazil, she left *Britannia* at 4.30 p.m. and returned two hours later richer by one three-foot pottery vase, some LP's of local music, an oil painting of an ornamental gate, some children's art, and a wooden key. In Brasilia between the hours of 12.15 and 3.55 the Royal shrimping net had already scooped up a signed silver-framed photograph of the President and his wife, a leather-bound book on Brasilia, a gold model of Brasilia Cathedral, and what were bafflingly described as 'a gold Balanganda and Two Oncas'. A mere five days in Australia resulted in twenty-six gifts for the Queen including a bronze cauldron, a couple of ponies, a large wooden chest, an umbrella and a book called *Halfing — a Horse captures the Hearts of the World* by one Otto Schweisgut. Prince Philip notched up eight presents, Princess Anne five, and Prince Charles, for some inexplicable reason, only one ice-pick.

What happens to it all? Whither the talking drums given to her in Ghana, the Nepalese yak's-hair fly-whisk, the tureen of tripes from Caen, the gold replica of Karachi Town Hall, the 110-foot Canadian totem pole, the model of the Osten trawler? Not to mention the elephants, bears, boa-constrictors, crocodiles and turtles, all of which have been pressed upon her at various times around the world.

Officially, the Queen gives houseroom to the lot. Luckily she has a lot of houseroom to give — 600 rooms in Buckingham Palace alone. Any suitable museum can have an appropriate object on permanent loan — the polite fiction being maintained that if, for example, the Queen had a sudden urge to make use of her ceremonial harakiri sword from Kyoto the curators of the British Museum or the Victoria and Albert would instantly remove it from its glass case and send it round by special messenger.

The London Zoo is the chief recipient of the exotic livestock she receives. The garden at Buckingham Palace is large enough to accommodate half a dozen elephants, and I dare say room could be found for the boa constrictors and crocodiles at one of her other homes, but the Queen prefers to share her more outlandish gifts with the British public.

The Palace nowadays feels free to offer guidance to potential present-givers, which you may feel is just as well. A length of carpet or a dozen blankets are a good deal more useful than a set of talking drums, and there is no reason why monarchs should not try to be practical. But every gift, however fanciful, is catalogued, stored and kept in running order so that it can be whisked into a prominent position whenever its donor comes to stay. It is an awesome task, and the Palace is understandably anxious to lighten the load of unsolicited gifts. It made known some time ago that the Queen will not accept presents from private persons with whom she is not acquainted; this has eliminated (or at least sidetracked) some of the crass attempts to make commercial capital out of the whole business. But gifts from organisations and foreign dignitaries are less easily stopped and Masters of the Royal Household responsible for looking after this vast store of goodies must groan when they learn of yet another royal tour looming into view.

Her Majesty's Ministers have less of a problem. The Government has firm ground rules covering the acceptance of gifts at home or abroad. Nothing, but nothing, must be allowed to give the impression that a Foreign Secretary or Chancellor of the Exchequer can be bribed. If the value of the gift exceeds £50 or £60 ministers are advised not to accept it. The assumption, it seems, is that politicians are trained to put a fairly accurate price on everything they see. In practice, gifts are usually handed to a civil service aide — and have frequently been known to disappear. 'Oh by the way,' the Minister will casually ask the following morning, 'what happened to those gold fish knives the Sheik of Kuwait gave me yesterday?' The guardian of public morals looks surprised. 'Minister,' he says, 'you couldn't *possibly* keep them.' In short, the decision has been made and he'd better keep quiet about it.

Paintings, as a rule, end up on the wall of some Whitehall office and, as already mentioned, there is a pool of watches,

clocks and other trinkets from which ministers are supplied with gifts to hand to their hosts on foreign trips. I don't know whether any foreign statesman has ever been given back his own present, but the possibility clearly exists.

Despite the rules, long-serving ministers usually end up with a considerable store of minor presents. Robert Carr treasures a pair of silver-plated handcuffs, given to him when he was Home Secretary. Jim Callaghan has kept an inkstand presented by Russia's Alexei Kosygin. None of this could be construed as bribery, but the political dangers involved in the game were well illustrated, a couple of years ago, by the Tale of the Silver Coffee Pot. It had been given to Tony Crosland, then a Labour Minister, after he had opened a new building constructed by a man called Poulson. Gifts of this kind are commonplace, and Crosland wrote the usual letter of appreciation. 'I am,' he said, 'most grateful for the very beautiful coffee pot you so kindly gave me and my wife. I shall treasure it as a memory of a very beautiful building.' What he didn't know, and couldn't know, was that Poulson was busy bribing all sorts of local officials and would before long find himself in prison. The coffee pot hit the headlines, and Crosland was besieged by reporters and TV cameras. 'I don't,' he protested, 'care tuppence for that damn pot. It's been lying in the cupboard for seven years with a lot of other lunatic things and has never been used. All I want to do is to get rid of the bloody thing.'

Britain's friends in Europe were much mystified. How could anyone believe that ministers could be bought with such a trivial gift? In Italy, it was the kind of present which parents gave teachers to make sure their offspring passed the examinations. In France one spends that sort of money on town councillors and policemen. Ministers were much more expensive.

I have no doubt that African and Latin American politicians were just as mystified. For many of them bribery is a way of life: what other reason could a man possibly have for going into politics? (I also like the story of the local U.S. judge who came into court one morning at the start of the case and said: 'It is only right that I should tell the court that yesterday morning the attorney for the plaintiff came to me with a bribe of $15,000. Yesterday afternoon, the attorney for the defendant came to me with a bribe of $20,000. Needless to say, I have

already returned to the attorney for the defendant the sum of $5,000.') The Coffee Pot Affair blew over, as it deserved to, but most British politicians still prefer to err on the side of caution.

Businessmen, of course, have less need to worry. The worst that can happen is that you end up carrying all sorts of unwanted junk halfway around the world, and paying duty on it when you finally make it to the airport back home. I once went to Japan, to take part in a World Economic Symposium organised by one of the country's leading publishers. My fellow speakers were economic editors from the United States and France, and on the last day we were invited to a parting ceremony. The whole staff was there and everyone applauded madly while we were loaded up with presents: a tape recorder, a radio, a beautiful Japanese print, and several books. The producer of a TV programme we had taken part in during our stay was also there and gave my wife a pearl necklace. We thanked them warmly and went out to buy an extra suitcase so we could take the hoard with us to our next stop Australia. I suppose we should have been grateful that they didn't give us a harakiri sword — or, God forbid, a boa constrictor.

I have a number of small mementos of pleasant business trips, including a collection of unusual cufflinks, but I can't say I am particularly enamoured of souvenirs. They rarely look as good at home as they do in their local setting. In any case, the more attractive and genuinely indigenous the object you discover on your travels, the more likely it is to be available from the more enterprising retailers in your own native quarter. It will also be cheaper, less wearisome to transport, and less likely to fall apart as you unwrap it on the kitchen table. The same is true of most of the stuff one buys for the Little Woman — jewellery, saris, belts, watches, caftans.

There are, however, people for whom shopping is very much part of the pleasure of an overseas trip. They spend more time in bazaars than in museums, art galleries or temples; for them the shops are the main local sights. And, of course, their trade keeps a large number of people in profitable employment. In East Africa, the Masai now seem to spend most of their time selling us back the gaudy beads we traded them a couple of decades ago. In the Caribbean countless traders specialise in

so-called 'airport art' — factory made carvings, pottery and other trinkets which may look good to the starry-eyed traveller while he's in the shop but which tend to be depressingly tatty when he unwraps them back home. In Beirut (and, I dare say, many other places) they have factories manufacturing instant antiques — and you'd be surprised how many people fall for them. It *is* possible to find delightful things at a reasonable price but the compulsive shopper should observe a few basic rules. Never buy anything in hotel shops unless you are quite sure it's a bargain; you will usually find the same item for much less further down the road. Always be on the guard against fakes; there are more around than you think and they are often very skilfully done. Don't bargain in department stores or speciality shops, but try your luck in smaller establishments; in the East, particularly, the correct price for the item you want to buy is probably between one third and one half of the price asked. Not least, do your best to visualise a painting, carving or carpet on the wall, mantelpiece or floor where it will end up. Cost apart, there is no point in carting an object halfway round the world if you are going to hate it once it's installed in your lair. If you want to have it posted to your address ask your hotel porter, or the local tourist office, which shops specialise in shipping and care enough for their long-term reputation not to cheat. Shops sponsored by governments, museums or craftsmen's associations are usually good bets. Make sure your specifications are understood (if there's a language problem, keep directions simple) and hold on to the receipt. Ask for an estimated date of delivery, but be prepared to wait. If after three months nothing arrives write to the store, send a copy to the local tourist office and attach photocopies of your receipts. If the hotel porter or tour escort took you to the store write to their bosses.

One of the greatest souvenir hunters of the twentieth century was, without doubt, William Randolph Hearst, who roamed around the world — and especially Europe — with a suitcase full of blank cheques. If he saw a priceless tapestry he asked the price — and paid it. If he came across a carved ceiling in some Italian or Spanish monastery he told the owner to wrap it up. If he was shown a medieval banqueting hall in Britain or Spain, a Roman swimming pool in Ravenna, or an ornate bedroom in

the Doge's Palace in Venice he hired craftsmen to copy it. If you should ever find yourself in California, as I did a couple of years ago, you can see the result at Hearst Castle, an extraordinary mixture of styles and collector's items which cost its creator nearly $50 million — bought, one should add, pre-1939. More recent collectors include oil millionaire Paul Getty and the afore-mentioned David Rockefeller.

Rockefeller is a seemingly tireless traveller. I have interviewed him several times, in various countries, and have always been struck by his imperturbability, even when under extreme pressure. Faced with a killing schedule, and the confusion often associated with travel, many businessmen feel — and look — harassed. Not Rockefeller. 'I am not a worrier' he once told me at a bankers' meeting in Copenhagen. 'I find it easy to make decisions; I don't spend hours agonising over them.' Like most millionaires, he is very much on his guard against people who assume that, because he is enormously wealthy, anything goes. 'I won't be taken in,' he says. He tries to slip off to galleries between business meetings abroad, and if he likes something he will buy it either for the bank or for one of his four homes. Dealers frequently have no idea that they are bargaining with a Rockefeller: he prefers it that way. Friends who have accompanied him on business trips call him the 'cruise director' because he is, as a rule, a relentless organiser, eager to meet everybody and see everything. Given his inbred concern with value for money, I asked him how he felt about art as an investment. 'For any serious collector,' he replied, 'it has to be a subordinate aspect. You have to buy things which are beautiful and which you like. If they increase in value, it's a bonus.' One of the things he likes is a sculpture by Jean Dubuffet, entitled 'Group of Four Trees'. Rockefeller chose it himself — after spending a total of forty-five minutes in Dubuffet's workshop at Perigny-sur-Yerres, near Paris. It now stands, forty-two-feet-high, in the Plaza surrounding the massive Chase building.

Now *that's* what I call a souvenir.

CHAPTER NINE

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

CONTINENTALS who visit Britain for the first time frequently express surprise that so few of us wear bowler hats. The stereotyped Englishman remains as firmly established in European minds as the traditional stage Frenchman or German remains in ours. Cold, aloof, sexless, puritanical — these are the kind of labels regularly tied to the Englishman's allegedly ubiquitous umbrella.

Generalising about people is a game full of pitfalls, as any regular business traveller knows. Would you be able to tell a Japanese, or a South American, what makes an Englishman tick? What kind of Englishman? The docker in Southampton, the stockbroker in Ascot, the bus driver in Hackney, the teacher at Eton, or the car manufacturer in Wolverhampton? One only has to look at the assumptions made by others about us to question some of the opinions we express about them. Many visitors are convinced that the British Isles are packed with eccentrics. They want to think so anyway. Like the Americans, European tourists are not interested in splendid visions of the New Britain. They are much too wrapped up in their own problems to care whether we build modern factories and office blocks, or put a few million more on the balance of payments. They wish us well — but if they care about anything at all it is the Old Britain. They want to hear about Stonehenge, Stratford, the Tower of London and the Royal Family. Especially the Royal Family: Continental newspapers and magazines continue to give a quite extraordinary amount of coverage to every move. The castles, the clubs, the processions of Knights of the Garter, Eton and Harrow — this is the real world to millions of Europeans, Americans and Japanese, not the grim factory

towns of the North or the impoverished valleys of Wales. It is one reason why Britons are invariably described as English, wherever they happen to come from. Continentals are genuinely astonished when someone points out that he's not English but Welsh. And Americans, as we all know, like to take bits of Olde England home or, at least, to build replicas. London Bridge is doing well in Arizona and so are indoor places like the Great English Disaster in New York, the *Queen Mary* in Los Angeles and the Abbey in Marina del Rey, California. This quote from the Abbey's brochure will, I think, give you the flavour:

> The Abbey was built from the original set from Camelot, and filled with the widest collection of medieval treasures ever assembled since the days when knights rode off to rescue maidens in distress. Relax into a bishop's chair by a blazing cobblestone fireplace while monks serve you and handmaidens attend to your thirst. Then settle into a King's feast . . .'

You don't get that kind of service in London, even at the Hilton. The day will come, I expect, when we shall all fly to America whenever we have a hankering to see anything British. While at home they are busy opening hamburger joints and Kentucky Fried Chicken shops. American hotels pride themselves on their muffins, Yorkshire puddings and Chelsea buns: I have had better 'English food' in New York than in London.

We are also, of course, the leading supplier of economic crises. They are widely regarded as part of our eccentricity and people (especially Continentals) enjoy them because (1) they are entertaining and (2) they make them feel better. Dr. Karl-Heinz Wocker, London correspondent of West German radio and TV, said in a recent book that there are only two things people want from him: comedy and crisis. Dotty Earls and Dukes are always welcome: his editors were delighted when they heard that the Duke of Chesterfield's daughter could stand on her head for longer than anyone else and had become the official champion. Wocker and other journalists have firm instructions to look out for this kind of story — and, meantime, to

produce a steady flow of proof that our trade unions have lost none of their taste, and talent, for pig-headed folly.

Britain's labour troubles always make news on the Continent, especially if they revolve around tea breaks. It doesn't really matter that Continental countries, such as Italy, regularly outdo our own unions: British strikes are considered much more interesting. There is even a tendency, these days, to praise Britain for the alleged failures. It is fashionable, in some countries, to talk about the quality of life and, it seems, we win approval because we give the impression that we would rather play cricket than sell refrigerators to the Eskimos or bomb Vietnam. Americans flock to London because, as one American author now resident here explained to me, they just love the decadence. Personally I have always thought that one was more likely to find it in Paris, but even Parisians insist that London is nowadays the more decadent of the two. A business trip to Britain, I am told, tends to attract as much ribald comment from office colleagues as business trips to Paris still do here.

British governments, of course, are reluctant to perpetuate the Ann Hathaway image. Their Britain is supposed to be brisk, efficient, *new*. They would much rather have people get their views from the *Financial Times* than from journals like *In Britain*, which regularly lists events like Blessing the Plough, Proclamation of the Beast Mart, and Tolling the Devil's Knell. Many Europeans do: the *Financial Times* is the best-read business newspaper in Europe, and if you talk to a Continental businessman he will praise the efficiency of the City and, in all probability, say nice things about British technology. (He will also complain about British licensing hours: they are one tradition most Europeans feel they can do without.) Talk to a politician or diplomat and you are sure to hear about our 'pragmatism'. Government sponsored bodies like the Central Office of Information and the BBC's Overseas Service do their best to keep the image bright. The world is fed with a steady diet of production statistics and learned pamphlets on *Agricultural Research in Britain*, the *Motor Vehicle Industry in Britain*, and the *History of the Co-Operative Movement in Britain*. There are give-away TV films on the City and Parliament and taped radio programmes on anything from the Concorde to the Beatles. (The Beatles were a blessing; they

provided just the right mixture of irreverence and British eccentricity.) But it would be wrong not to acknowledge that the seemingly endless stream of bad publicity in recent years has had an adverse effect on our image. Britons who venture abroad must be ready to defend themselves and their country — if they can — against the kind of charges which, alas, have been heard all too often in Britain itself.

What does one say? That Britain gave the world the jet engine and that, despite all her problems, she is still one of the most technologically advanced nations in Europe? That she exports a high proportion of her output? That she didn't invent inflation, high interest rates, or strikes? That many overseas firms have enough confidence in the future to invest millions of pounds in British subsidiaries? That until recently British industry was losing only about half as many days to strikes on average as American industry? That at the very moment when we are bemoaning the impotence of our businessmen the French should be debating what their press has dubbed the 'British Invasion', *le défi anglais*? Well, yes, perhaps all these things. But I confess that I find excessive patriotism rather embarrassing. I squirm when I hear some loud-voiced businessman announce at a function abroad that 'British is best'. Better, surely, to prove yourself in the only way that really matters: decisiveness in your own dealings, prompt delivery, and a proper after-sales service.

There are as many clichés about the Germans as there are about us. They are said to be arrogant, chauvinistic, blindly obedient, overbearing, militaristic, humourless and addicted to work. The visitor who merely seeks to confirm preconceived notions will find evidence of all these unlovely traits. There *are* Germans who are chauvinistic, arrogant, blindly obedient, overbearing and all the rest. Economic success has made them insufferable. But there are also Germans who are warm and hospitable, and who have a great sense of fun. (Berlin is justly famous for its dry wit, and its excellent satirical revues.)

Some generalisations are more obviously out of date than others. No one, today, would accuse the Germans of being militaristic: the young dislike military service and the modern German army can hardly be called an efficient fighting

machine. Nor are the Germans particularly chauvinistic: they gave that up after the last war and are probably the most internationally minded people in Europe. They do not miss the days of Nazi glory — the neo-Nazi party has made no progress — and their respect for authority is no greater than ours. They do not even eat more sauerkraut than anyone else: in a recent survey only three per cent of those questioned named it as their favourite dish.

West Germany is just over half the size of the former German Reich, and has a population of just over sixty million —made up of people with widely differing backgrounds, customs and character. Bavarians have more in common with Austrians than with Germans from Berlin. East Frisians are more like the Dutch than Rhinelanders. Bearded young hippies — and Germany has plenty of them — have nothing in common with middle class businessmen. There is no such thing as the 'typical German', just as there is no such thing as the 'typical Briton'. So the business traveller would be well advised to leave his prejudices at home.

If you have a taste for statistics, there are certain facts which you might find useful — though again they need to be treated with caution. Workers in West Germany are, without question, paid the most for almost the shortest working week in Europe. The visitor can be fairly sure that the Germans he sees on the streets are better off in a real material sense than other Europeans, and as well as many Americans. But the output per head lags behind that of the Swiss, Swedes and Danes. (Germany rates fourth in the world table, followed by the United States and Norway. Britain is fourteenth.) Work starts early in the day, but working hours generally are shorter. When religious and other holidays are added in, the German worker gets up to two months paid holiday a year. Since 1970 he has been getting six weeks on full pay when he falls ill, and three-quarters pay almost indefinitely after that. Pensions come increasingly early and are in effect indexed to the cost of living. The German worker has a greater say over how he works and where he works than anyone else except the Swede. He eats well and drinks more beer than anyone else in Europe.

Industry is heavily geared to overseas markets and more than half of all exports are investment goods. There is much em-

phasis on technical innovation: Germany is almost alone in paying technical and production executives more than their colleagues in finance and marketing.

But statistics don't tell the whole story. They don't prepare the visitor for the poor service in many shops and restaurants (it can be surly and excruciatingly slow) and for the belligerence of the young. They don't tell you that in cities like Hanover and Hamburg many older people won't go out after dark because they fear being mugged or getting caught up in gang warfare. Nor do they give any hint that German cities all tend to look much the same, or reflect the more unattractive side of the relentless process of keeping up with the Schmidts.

I was born in Germany and left at the age of fifteen, a few years after the end of the Second World War. My memory of the early post-war period, a time of desperate shortages, remains so vivid that I still haven't quite come to terms with the modern Germany. Today's prosperity represents such a startling contrast to yesterday's poverty. And attitudes have changed: young businessmen, and young trade unionists, are no longer influenced by the atmosphere of co-operation that was built up after the war. Not long ago I found myself on the same speakers' platform as Dr. Ludwig Erhard, the man generally credited with performing the much publicised miracle. He told me that the 1946–49 period was unique: it would be quite hopeless to attempt the same things in this decade. 'After the war,' he said, 'people would accept almost anything. They were so dazed, so eager to rebuild that we were able to push through reforms which would nowadays involve years of argument. The Americans had it all worked out: they found me, showed me a fat file they had on my career, gave me a blueprint, promised vast sums of money, and told me to get on with the job.'

German workers are supposed to be the most docile in Europe, and there is no doubt that labour relations are better than in Britain. There is certainly less class warfare. But their alleged docility owes much to the success of management in earning enough to pay them handsome rises over the years. Why strike when everyone seems to be doing very nicely? Now, however, rising prices are threatening to halt progress and, as in other countries, trade union leaders are under pressure from their members to do something about it. German companies are

still good at keeping delivery dates and the visitor will, by and large, be spared the sudden, unexpected stoppages by public service workers which make travelling in Italy and France such a nightmare. But the natives are getting restless: the *Wirtschaftswunder* is over.

Many thoughtful Germans — including Willy Brandt — fear that a prolonged recession could lead to a revival of those nationalistic temptations which led to the collapse of the Weimar Republic. But it would be wrong, at this stage, to sound the alarm. Xenophobia contributed as much as anything else to the nationalistic climate of the old Germany; one sees little, if anything, of that today. Germans, by and large, tend to be much more outward looking than the French or British. There is more nationalism in Glasgow or Cardiff than in Berlin or Bonn. And memories of the not-so-distant past act as a powerful curb on official complacency.

First time visitors are invariably struck by the apparent German obsession with all things American and English. The big American industrial names are all well represented and so are large hotel chains like Hilton, Sheraton, and Inter-Continental. Films and TV programmes made in Hollywood and London have a large following. So do American and British pop songs; it is no accident that the Beatles started their career in Hamburg. Not least, one hears an extraordinary amount of English. The German language is studded with words like 'manager', 'boss', 'hobby' and 'baby-sitter'. The German goes *shoppen im Flower-Center* and enjoys *Entertainment mit dem Girls*. He takes part in *teach-ins, sit-ins, und die Happenings*. In business, you will hear people say that they are *gehandicapped* or even *ausgenockt*. My favourite is this quote from an article written by a German journalist:

> Seit dem Ubergang von der demand-pull zur cost-push inflation bei im trend horizontalen realen Wachstumspfad, also de facto stagflation, hat das deficit spending einem neuen Stellenwert im policy mix der ja nicht self defeating werden darf.'

With everyone keen to display his knowledge of the British language the visitor is unlikely to get much chance to practise

his German, which is perhaps as well. An English friend who runs a company in Germany has put together a light-hearted guide to expressions best not used during discussions with Works Councils and trade unions. They include 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush' (the German word 'Vogel' — bird — has various other dubious meanings and may easily be misunderstood when used in a formal setting) and 'There are more ways of killing a pig than hanging it'. (Never use the German word 'Schwein' in formal sessions.) He also cautions against use of the phrase 'Look before you leap'. Germans, he says, '*always* look, check, get everything signed in duplicate and published in a proper printed form. They only leap during *Fasching*, and even then only in Roman Catholic areas.'

Despite such pitfalls it is easier to do business in Germany than in countries like France and Italy. The pace is faster and negotiations more direct. The telephone service is reliable and people keep appointments. The trade fairs in Frankfurt and Hanover are justly famous as Europe's leading international showcases; the Frankfurt Book Fair is particularly entertaining. Night life in major cities like Berlin and Hamburg is exuberant, noisy and expensive. Having fun is tackled with the same determination, the same zest, as normally devoted to building tractors or *Lokomotiven* — and there is no law which says you can't join in, *providing* your expense account can stand it.

You are, I trust, familiar with the European anthem. No? Well, it's Schiller's 'Ode to Joy' which Beethoven managed to work into his ninth symphony. I have no idea who chose it, and why, and I doubt if it will do much for European unity. But it represents one of the many attempts to give some meaning to the European Community — better (and more accurately) known as the Common Market. There is also a European flag and, of course, a European Parliament. None of these trappings, alas, mean much to the 250 million people living in what the late President Pompidou once called 'this privileged zone of prosperity'. It's not just that dear old Schiller's Ode has nothing much to do with Europe, or that few people have a clue what the European flag looks like. De Gaulle publicly doubted whether a United States of Europe could ever command the

same loyalty as an individual country and I am sure that he was right. The concept is by no means new. Generations of statesmen, soldiers, philosophers and madmen have had much the same vision. The Roman Emperors had it. So did Napoleon and Hitler — men who had no patience with the democratic process and, therefore, nearly succeeded in making their dream come true. It is hard to think of any subject which has caused more trouble — or inspired more waffle.

In 1949, a battered continent set up a Council of Europe and Paul-Henri Spaak summed up the feelings of elderly politicians who had suddenly come to realise, with upsetting clarity, that two fierce wars had produced a most unwelcome result: Europe's virtual bankruptcy and the complete supremacy of Russia and the United States. 'A hundred and fifty million Europeans,' Spaak protested, 'have not the right to feel inferior to anyone, do you hear? There is no great country in this world that can look down on a hundred and fifty million Europeans who close their ranks in order to save themselves.'

Fine, upstanding sentiments. Why, then, hasn't it happened already? Why, after twenty-three years of well-intentioned effort and a million speeches, do we have the trappings of a United States of Europe, but not the reality? It is too easy to blame the Eurocrats in Brussels. I have met quite a few and I have generally found them enthusiastic about Europe. Why shouldn't they be? It's their future. No, the fault — if fault it is — lies with the politicians. It's they who shout 'Forward' and, at the same time, apply the brake. We have a European Council of Ministers, a Commission, and even a Parliament. We have summits, seminars and an ocean of paper. But all these institutions lack real power; important decisions are still taken at the national level, as they have always been. The symbols of the new Europe are not flags, thrones, and splendidly dressed armies but cars, supermarkets and television serials. It is a Europe of Expresso and frozen fish fingers, a Europe where idealism tends, at best, to be regarded as a luxury and at worst a waste of time.

Created in 1958, the Common Market aimed at abolishing trade barriers between member countries — and, eventually, at economic integration leading to the long-term goal of political unity. The removal of tariffs proved to be a relatively simple

operation, and one that could be undertaken in easy, graduated steps. It was not only painless, but advantageous for every member state. The Community also managed to agree on a number of other measures of direct relevance to businessmen, including free mobility of labour. But financial integration has proved immensely more difficult, partly because it involves legislative changes which would go to the heart of long-established national practices and traditions in which the practitioners have a powerful vested interest.

In 1972 the Nine approved an ambitious plan for economic and monetary union, leading to a common currency by 1980. The idea had many attractions. Trade would be easier and there would be an end to the nonsense of treating national currencies as symbols of sovereignty. The Euro, or whatever it was to be called, would be the most powerful — and most widely used — currency in the world, supplanting the dollar. But, of course, there is much more to turning dreams like these into reality than drawing up plans and finding a new name for a currency. To make the scheme work, E.E.C. members would gradually have to give up much of their autonomy. It would clearly be difficult to make a Euro-currency work while they continue to have very different price, cost and wage structures and rate of inflation. This would mean close co-operation in areas like taxation, credit control, company law and annual budgets. On the monetary side it would mean, among other things, a single balance of payments. No more national balance of payments crises of the kind which have plagued Britain since the war; we would all pull together. Capital movements would be completely free; if there were exchange controls, they would be maintained against the outside world. This would make it possible for members to invest anywhere in the community without restrictions. Individuals could buy property abroad without having to pay a hefty premium just for the privilege of obtaining the necessary currency. You don't have to be a financial expert to recognise that all this amounts to something of a revolution. And that's the trouble: no one is ready for such a drastic step.

At the Community headquarters in Brussels Eurocrats argue that 'Europe is not in the instant miracle business' and point to all kinds of lesser achievement. A great deal of work has, for

example, gone into attempts to eliminate the mass of technical and legal regulations which have long acted as an effective tariff barrier. Studies show that the cost of the same object in stores across the Common Market still show large differences, caused by the jungle of restrictions on distribution, protective government regulations, and unequal tax structures. To idealists the Common Market's apparent preoccupation with harmonising textile labels, preservants, mayonnaise and the fat content of ice cream may seem petty and irrelevant; to the men of Brussels it presents progress. The general public, they say, is feeling the benefits of the Community more and more each day, as an increasing number of goods from other member countries come into the shops. The European car buyer is four times as likely to buy a car from another Community country as in 1958. And many housewives buy products which were unknown to them before. 'It took the Common Market to teach many Germans that artichokes were edible,' Brussels points out proudly.

British businessmen, of course, were in the Common Market long before Britain signed the Treaty of Rome — and will continue to be so whether we stay in or not. They set up manufacturing facilities on the Continent, creating selling and servicing subsidiaries, bought share stakes in local firms, and went into all kinds of joint ventures. Since 1973 Britain has bought up a great deal of real estate in Paris and Brussels (including the offices of the Figaro) and a great deal of European prepared food industries (including French biscuits). Banks like National Westminster have acquired sizeable share stakes in Dutch, Italian and French banks, and the level of cooperation is greater than ever before. The Gnomes of Zurich readily concede that there isn't much they can teach the Gnomes of London. And guess who owns the Carlton in Cannes, the Metropole in Monte Carlo, the Europa in Brussels, the Amstel in Amsterdam and the Savoy in Rome? Right first time. None other than the very British Mr. Maxwell Joseph.

But there is still no common business law (which would make cross-frontier mergers that much easier) and most E.E.C. countries maintain elaborate systems of exchange control in defiance of their Treaty obligations. Doctors, architects, lawyers, dentists and accountants have been handicapped in

other ways: Community members are still quarrelling about the value of their respective professional qualifications.

To the ordinary citizens, in France and Italy as much as in Britain, membership of the Community has meant very little. 'Life,' the Dutch Prime Minister once told his European colleagues 'is not lived at the summit, but at the level of daily cares.' They nodded agreement — and went on talking about regional development funds, deficit payment systems, snakes in the tunnel and other lofty concepts. When the Italian Prime Minister proposed, some time later, that the E.E.C. 'Club' should abolish passports, and that people should have European citizenship as well as their own, the idea was rejected out of hand.

Citizens of member countries can, of course, move around freely within the Community and seek jobs wherever they like. The Labour Party made much of this when Britain applied for membership: M.P.'s conjured up fearful pictures of hordes of lecherous Italians arriving at Heathrow, fiendishly detetmined to deprive honest British workmen of their livelihood and raping decent British girls into the bargain. It didn't happen — which you might just possibly regard as a bit of an insult. The British have been no more eager to go Over There. Firms setting up on the Continent have exported some of their staff, but workers have shown no great urge to leave crisis-prone Britain for France or Germany. Perhaps that's because there have been some rather ugly rumours about long hours and tight discipline: those who have returned from preliminary forays even claim that they were expected to learn the local language. The nerve of these foreigners! At management level, too, the power of inertia is enormous. Multi-nationals may find it fairly easy to persuade their more imaginative staff to move about in Europe within the familiar shell of the parent company, but to drop a known job in a British firm to jump across into an unfamiliar post in another European country is still a pretty rare act of managerial courage.

One of the troubles with Europe is that no one really thinks of himself as European. We are still Britons, Italians, Frenchmen or Germans. In Britain we still show far more interest in America than in, say, Germany or Holland. We know appallingly little about Continental television, art, literature or

even pop music. And I bet you have never met anyone who introduced himelf at a cocktail party or business conference as a European. Perhaps it will happen with the next generation. Most of the young people I know have a more clear-cut idea of the kind of Europe they want to live in than their elders. They willingly accept the idea of open frontiers, free trade, mobility of labour and common laws. They do not see Germans or Italians as one-time enemies and are much more inclined to regard the beaches of Italy and France as common property. Like Henry Ford, they tend to feel that history is bunk. Napoleon's battles have the same ludicrous ring about them as those old newsreel films of the Nuremberg Rallies and other displays of patriotic fervour which inspired earlier generations. Television has helped to show the futility of war, exposed the histrionics of leaders, and made people keenly interested in parts of the world which their forebears hardly knew existed. Getting on with other human beings has become more important than demonstrating that one is a good patriot. Europe looks a good deal smaller to the twenty-year-old of today than it did to his father and grandfather. Modern architecture ensures that it also looks increasingly similar. There is still a considerable difference between Paris and Rome, or Madrid and London. But the differences are being whittled away by energetic property developers; Jacques Tati's vision of a Europe in which every city looks exactly the same no longer seems far-fetched.

A few days after Britain joined the Community early in 1973 I took a group of school children, winners of a *Punch* essay competition on Europe, to meet the then Prime Minister, Edward Heath. One of them asked him, tongue in cheek, what one had to do to become a good European. Eat spaghetti vongole on Tuesdays and Fridays? Watch more Continental movies? Develop a passion for sauerkraut and pumpernickel? Mr. Heath thought for a while and then said, rather lamely, that 'we must not assume that everything foreign is worse'. We went to the Common Market headquarters in Brussels — a world of glass and aluminium, far removed from everyday reality — and fared rather better. A voluble Italian official handed the children a fat portfolio of documents with titles like *The Urban Phenomenon in Europe, Industrial Policy and the E.E.C.*, and *Curbing Pollution*. He also explained that, in order

to be a good European, you had to learn to live with other people. In his own departments there were Italians, Belgians and Germans working together. It was not compulsory to eat spaghetti on Tuesdays, or sauerkraut on Thursdays, but it was important to try. One also had to make some attempt to learn languages: it was bad form to stick to one's own. The children listened attentively, but were more taken by a highly irreverent film made specially for the E.E.C. Narrated by Peter Ustinov, it attacked prejudice by mocking familiar clichés like 'Italians are lecherous cowards' and 'all Germans are militaristic'. Ustinov blamed history lessons. 'On the playground,' he said, 'we re-enacted the old wars, repeated how we loathe foreigners, and played the parts we had heard about in class. Our enemies were always people who spoke a different language or had a different colour of skin.' The film ended with a modern European family looking at all the old stereotypes in the zoo. The children laughed but claimed to have little prejudice: it was, they felt, much more common among older people, including their parents.

Perhaps so. A British M.P. returning from the European parliament not long ago decided, on arrival at London airport, to walk through the gate marked E.E.C. passports. 'Not here, you're British' he was told by a stern official. The M.P. patiently explained that, as we were now in Europe, he was as much an E.E.C. passport holder as everyone else. A higher official was summoned and ruled that it was in order for him to go through as long as he didn't mind being treated as a foreigner. For many people that incident just about sums up British attitudes.

A few idealists apart, the only people who really look and act like Europeans are — oddly enough — the resident Americans. They don't argue about the past, squabble about sovereignty, or insist on defending national interests. They work just as willingly in London as in Paris and Rome, and discriminate far less than we do against prospective employees whose only drawback is that they have the 'wrong' nationality. They dress alike, talk alike, use the same business techniques. They try to speak the local language, but generally work on the assumption that everyone they are likely to do business with will know at

least a little English. Their corporations have broken down the traditional barriers to a far greater extent than their European rivals. While we still talk about the possibility of big European mergers, they operate a large and prosperous network of branches in every country.

The Hilton is better established than any other hotel chain. *Time* and *Newsweek* have a more diverse readership throughout Europe than any European magazine. Hertz and Avis are ubiquitous. American banks are everywhere (in the City of London one of the main streets has long been known as the Avenue of the Americas) and the Euro-dollar is the nearest thing to a Euro-currency. In short, there is a separate world which, in a strange sort of way, seems more real than the land of Willy Brandt's dreams.

The spiritual headquarters of this world is still New York, Detroit or Chicago. Americans in Europe (especially the young) may claim that our cities are infinitely more pleasant to live in, but their attitudes remain defiantly American. That's one reason why I make a point of reading the *Herald Tribune* every day; it may be published in Paris, but its perspective is refreshingly different from ours.

Americans abroad have cause to behave as if they owned the place. They often *do*. The American commercial empire is the modern equivalent of the one we abandoned; the power of money has taken the place of Britain's gunboats. And the conquests of American capital are so recent, and so dramatic, that a display of arrogance seems only too human. We, of all people, ought to know the feeling. Perhaps that's the trouble: we know it too well. It's not so bad when they are being arrogant in countries we have left behind. We can always console ourselves with the thought that we have graciously handed over to the fellas. The British press still reserves the right to tell America how it should handle its wars, presidents, economy, and race problems. But we react fiercely if Americans try to do the same to us. When Henry Ford, whose company has been in Britain since 1917, expressed some well-merited criticism on a brief visit in 1971, both journalists and politicians were outraged. Ford said he was worried by Britain's lack of stability, and warned that the company might stop new investment. His words drew the predictable rebuke from left-wing members of

Parliament ('Nationalise Fords!') and from the people who write angry letters to *The Times*. But the hysterical comments came from the press. One newspaper called it 'a brutal demonstration of the enormous power that new breed of company, the multi-national, can wield.'

American corporations are, by and large, very much aware that nationalism is a dangerous — and often irrational — enemy. They recognise that not everyone in Europe admires their techniques or welcomes their money. The brashness of the immediate post-war years has been replaced by polite caution. American executives are still exasperated by European ways, but most of them take care not to say so in public. If you want a real earful, you have to go to the bourbonised conclaves held by U.S. expatriates in the privacy of their homes, or visit the U.S. itself.

The American executive despatched to Europe — just as Englishmen used to be despatched to various parts of the Empire — is invariably urged to be tactful. He cannot help being an American, but he must not try to flaunt it. He is a guest in a foreign country, and his corporation's cause is best served if he helps to smooth the susceptibilities of the natives. Most corporations go out of their way to identify themselves with the 'host' country. They appoint British (or French, or German) directors and, wherever possible, retain the traditional local names. And booklets on corporate etiquette all stress the need to be receptive to differences in culture, manners and other sensitive areas. 'The American globocrat dealing with foreign executives,' says one of these guides, 'must include as part of his travelling equipment the patience of a saint, the wisdom of a philospher, and the open-mindedness to accept and appreciate the customs and mores that appear alien to him and unrelated to his American way of life.'

The visitor, naturally, tends to be more readily forgiven than the businessman who takes up residence. The globocrat will always encounter a certain amount of suspicion — whether he be American, German, Japanese, French or British. It is one of the more obvious drawbacks of taking a job abroad, and many people never learn to adapt.

They go back after a year or two, relieved that their period of exile is over. And yet the growth in world trade, the increasing

trend towards local manufacture, and the advent of the multinational corporation all make for greater mobility. Many companies would much rather keep a man (or team) on the spot than send people on constant visits. He can keep an eye on production and distribution, maintain contacts, develop new business, and deal with a hundred problems which the 'visiting fireman' might well mishandle.

For the executive himself, working abroad may mean a better climate, cheaper drink, more authority, and more congenial hours. Against this he and his family may have to struggle with strange languages and customs — constant reminders that they are not at home. Many ambitious executives feel, too, that a prolonged period of absence from headquarters, the centre of the action, greatly increases the risk of being passed over for promotion.

I know businessmen who have hated every minute of their enforced stay abroad, and who have switched to other companies just so they could return at the earliest opportunity. But I also know many more who regard it as one of the happiest episodes of their lives. Some stay for good. They look for promotion within the local company, or take a job with another firm which is about to set up in the region and needs an experienced managing director. Others go into business on their own — either in the same field or in a totally different, more adventurous area.

Britain's post-war economic crises (and, of course, her indifferent weather) have driven countless people into exile. Close to a million people have gone to Canada since 1945, and Australia has about the same number of people of British birth. Many others have gone to the sunshine places: South Africa, Spain, Portugal. Every new crisis produces a sharp increase in applications for jobs abroad. Some emigrees become citizens of their new country and adapt so well that, within a few years, all trace of the past has disappeared. Others become more English than they ever were at home — just to make sure that no one could possibly mistake them for anything else. They live in houses called Broadstairs, Worthing and Falmouth, wear blazers and old school ties, drink the Queen's Health on her birthday, and are fiercely patriotic about the country they have left behind. England (always referred to as 'home', even by

grandchildren who have never actually been there) is the greatest country in the world. Puzzled Americans are sometimes heard to ask why, in that case, they chose to leave. The question is usually ignored — or, if they are tactless enough to repeat it, dismissed with some vague reference to the weather, death duties, the trade unions, and Harold Wilson. Local politicians, too, occasionally ask why, if we are so efficient, Britain staggers from crisis to crisis. The correct answer to that one, it seems, is 'Will you have another drink?'

The traveller meets these 'last-straw' Englishmen — my label — all over the world. Some left when the pound was devalued in 1948 — the last straw. Others went when Eden made a mess of Suez, when the Government abolished hanging, when the Beatles got their M.B.E., when *The Times* put news on its front page, when cigarettes went up to two bob for twenty, when the dustmen went on strike, and when women were allowed into the Garrick. I dare say there are even people who decided they had had enough when the 8.30 to London Bridge was late three days running: 'the last straw' is often small.

The behaviour of last-straw Englishmen often gives offence, especially in developing countries where touchy locals see it as a hangover from the days of colonial rule. But I suppose it is natural for emigrees to form their own community, and to develop romantic notions about the 'old country'. The young tend to be more flexible, and I am sure that before long we shall see a generation of genuine Europeans, ready to work anywhere, at any time, without any particular attachment to the country of their birth. The Common Market rules provide for free interchange of labour and, in theory at least, no one should have difficulty in getting a job anywhere inside the community. No work permits are needed in any E.E.C. country. But professional people like lawyers, doctors and architects still require appropriate local qualifications (there is nothing, meanwhile, to stop a professional man being an adviser or consultant) and countries like Britain maintain a complex network of exchange controls which can prove rather irksome.

Like most people, I have occasionally given thought to escape. Not some managerial job in Germany, Canada or Africa, but real escapism — a restaurant in Positano, a ski-lodge in Kitzbuhl, a bar in Torremolinos, an antique shop in

Cannes. No more office politics, dreary train journeys, boring strikes, power cuts and nasty colds. Just one long, pleasant life in the sun, dispensing booze to happy customers and chatting up vulnerable female tourists. Goodbye rat-race.

I used to dream, years ago, of opening a bar or small hotel in my favourite Sicilian island, Lipari. I would hire buxom girls from Norway to cook fish on a handsome charcoal grill, make my own wine, and run a profitable boat service on the side.

What went wrong? My first doubts, I think, developed when it rained for a *whole day*. Suddenly everything looked different: you know the feeling. The doubts grew when I talked to local friends about the winter. Oh yes, they said, the winter was lovely. Except, of course, in January and February when it rained all the time. But no one had ever been able to attract tourists after October and before the Spring. So most of the restaurants were closed for half the year; the owners went fishing, worked in offices on the mainland, painted ceilings and helped friends build extra rooms, or simply sat around playing cards.

I have never been a good card player, but I resolved to see for myself at the earliest opportunity. The following year I went early in March. The island, so splendid in the summer months, looked drab and listless. I caught a cold and spent most of my time drinking brandy with the fellows I had watched, on earlier visits, dispensing booze to happy customers, chatting up vulnerable female tourists et cetera. They went on, at depressing length, about the difficulty of getting efficient staff, fresh fish, adequate supplies of water, and workmen willing to mend walls and roofs. They complained about cancelled bookings and mounting bills. How fortunate I was to have a job with regular pay! How marvellous it must be to live in London, with its fine cinemas, theatres and concert halls!

There didn't seem much point in telling them about *our* problems. Why shatter both our illusions? Besides, they were probably right. London wasn't such a bad place after all.

I haven't given up my dream (why should I?) but I have certainly become more cautious. We are, I realise, attracted by whatever we don't have at the moment. The attraction wanes as soon as we have it all the time. Perhaps it's a mistake to think too much about it — a sign, God help me, of advancing age.

The twenty-five-year-old charges ahead, blissfully unaware of snags and confident that he has ample time for experiments. The older man asks too many questions, spends too much time weighing the facts.

The facts can be daunting: if you are British you have to cope with an elaborate system of exchange controls, investment premiums, work permits (except in E.E.C. countries) and all kinds of unfamiliar regulations. Language may prove more of a barrier than you think, and the locals — so friendly when you were on holiday — may turn out to be a lot more awkward once you have turned into a competitor.

In the Algarve last year a Londoner who runs a pleasant little restaurant in Faro told me he couldn't wait to get back. Nothing much ever happened except in the summer — and then he was far too busy to join in the fun. It is a common complaint. But he *did* make enough, in a good year, to spend part of the winter in London, taking life easy.

This, of course, tends to be everyone's aim. You buy a place in the sun, spend six months in cheerful company making money, and go home as soon as the holiday season is over. With luck, the profits will see you through the winter. If not, you can always get a temporary job. A small hotel or *pensione* is even better: you can spend the winter months talking to travel agents and securing profitable bookings.

Dammit, I *know* it's possible. Plenty of people do it. In Antigua, last December, I met an ex-pilot called Peter Deeth, who runs an excellent little hotel in English Harbour called The Inn. Deeth used to fly tourists around the islands, and like many other people concluded that it would be nice to have a hotel right on the beach. A detached retina forced him to give up commercial flying at thirty-five and he set about building his own hotel. Britain was then still trying to create a West Indian Federation, and he managed to get a long-term, low-interest loan. He drew up some plans and went to see the Chief Minister, who brought his entire Cabinet down to the chosen site. After much argument they finally told him to go ahead.

Deeth opened his hotel in 1960, with only six rooms completed, and found the going harder than he had bargained for. 'It was a nightmare,' he says. Nearly everything he

needed — including food — had to be imported and there were frequent power cuts. Once the whole island went without power for ten days. There were strikes, too, and a couple of years ago he was threatened by riots — though, he says, 'it all blew over by teatime.' But Deeth persisted and today his venture is a well-deserved success. He earns enough to send his three children to boarding schools in England and Switzerland, and to maintain a yacht in Majorca, where he spends his summer months. Not everyone has fared as well; another British-owned hotel went bankrupt not long ago, and was sold off to an American-owned chain. But Deeth's experience shows that daydreams *can* be turned into reality.

Hotels and restaurants usually require a fair amount of capital and many people lack the flair (or patience) needed for success. They usually end up with all the worries that made them 'get away from it all' in the first place. Some prefer a farm (almost as difficult, but you don't have to deal with bad-tempered tourists) and some build boats. Others roam around the countryside looking for antiques and sell them to well-off City types who have just bought a second home. Some open laundries or boutiques. Some renovate cottages in France and Spain, and sell them to starry-eyed countrymen. There is no shortage of attractive opportunities — *if* you have the nerve to give up that cosy office job, with its assured pension and annual increments, and *if* you remember that nothing is easy.

Well, almost nothing.

'Don't,' says an official Japanese booklet, 'gargle at the dinner table with your drinking water. And don't stand on toilet seats — they're for sitting on.' I have, I confess, never met a Japanese businessman who thought otherwise but officialdom clearly prefers to play safe. Here are some of its other dos and don'ts for those who venture abroad:

DON'T wander around hotel lobbies in pyjamas or underwear.

DO avoid the typical Japanese male habit of shouldering women aside in a dash for doors and elevators. Give the opposite sex priority and don't forget to take off your hat.

DON'T strip down to underwear in order to relax in flight.

DO LEARN to distinguish between vacant and occupied on

toilet doors, and to avoid the Japanese habit of checking this by hammering loudly on the door.

Another Foreign Ministry publication is more serious and has some words of warning for the army of innocent young Japanese girls now heading overseas unaccompanied. 'They must learn clearly to say yes or no and not be vague, which occurs because of the peculiarities of the Japanese language.' Amen.

Young people have become increasingly impatient with some of the more rigid features of Japan's traditional code of behaviour, but in the business world — at least — there is still a strong sense of discipline. From birth the Japanese is drawn into a wide network of obligations — to the family, to teachers, to the company, to colleagues, to the Emperor and so on. Throughout life, the emphasis will be on his contribution to the *team*. His fellow citizens will expect constant proof of his sincerity (meaning, in the Japanese sense, good faith) and he will be immensely concerned with the complicated business of gaining or losing face. Failure to pass examinations means loss of face for the whole family; failure to meet a delivery date means loss of face for the firm. Gaucherie abroad comes into the same category.

Japan has an intense interest in everything foreign, and especially in America. Rich families send their sons to foreign universities and business schools, and even teach them baseball. I have heard more praise of the U.S. in three visits to Japan than in America itself. But it is a fallacy to think that the Japanese still have to copy our products. They have long passed the point where they have to go to America to learn how to make radios, or to Britain to find out how to build ships.

They are, however, copying our financial techniques. Britain built its empire through military conquest, and sustained it through huge investment abroad. America's empire is mostly commercial: companies like Ford and I.B.M. have been much more successful than the Pentagon's absurd venture in Vietnam. The Japanese know that militarism is out of date, but reckon they can use their knowledge, and their reputation in the world's financial centres, to construct a vast new edifice.

They have to, anyway. Japan is a relatively small country, housing a population of 100 million. They are painfully aware

of the price they have had to pay for material success. Tokyo, today, is one of the ugliest cities in the world. Japanese bankers and businessmen sadly refer to the Gross National Product as gross national pollution. There simply isn't room for any more factories. The obvious answer is to build abroad — to send well-trained emissaries to all corners of the world, just as Britain used to do, to set up Japanese-owned companies on the spot. It would have been done sooner, except that the Government decided to put local construction first. It forced Japanese business to invest at home — and, indeed, Japan's astonishing rate of investment in new plant and machinery is one of the chief reasons for its success. The Government knows, however, that this cannot continue for decades to come. It's not just that space is in short supply, but that other nations — such as America — are increasingly tempted to keep out direct Japanese exports. The Common Market is, essentially, a trading bloc which grants special privileges to members of the club and tries to discourage strangers. The most obvious counter for a nation like Japan is to set up shop inside the bloc — to manufacture locally rather than sending everything out from Tokyo and Osaka.

One result, inevitably, has been a sharp increase in the number of Japanese businessmen living in Europe and the U.S. Every major European city now has its own resident Japanese population. The largest single resident community is in Dusseldorf, where 2,500 Japanese make their homes, mostly in the upper-income suburb of Oberkassel. The Dusseldorf Japanese have their own social clubs and maintain an elementary school for 200.

London is Japan's European financial capital. Nearly 4,000 Japanese and their families live in London and its suburbs. They are employed by eighteen trading firms, twenty-three banks, sixty-one commercial firms, six investment companies, and nine insurance concerns. They have their own boarding school (the Rikko in Sussex), their own London club (the Nippon in Chelsea) and a dozen Japanese restaurants served by staff brought in from Japan. They have plans to open their own hospital — and, of course, their own golf club.

The Japanese invasion has been much less obtrusive than the earlier one by American finance houses. When an American

firm opens a branch, it gives a cocktail party and tries to get as much publicity as it can. The Japanese are more reticent. They are an easy touch for financial advertisements (which explains why *The Times* and others run so many supplements) but they try to avoid getting involved in any sort of controversy and take great care not to give offence. There is very little communication between them and the English people. The English tolerate them but don't pretend to understand their ways; the Japanese make some effort to understand but are happiest among their own kind. In a classy French, English, or Italian restaurant the Japanese businessman is often awkward, ill at ease. In Japanese surroundings (and especially in those private little rooms favoured by Japanese parties) he will readily let his hair down.

Western businessmen frequently complain that Japanese business methods drive them mad. An American who has done business in Japan for a number of years once spent a whole evening, at a dinner party given in Tokyo by the British Commercial Counsellor, telling me that the Japanese were doing everything wrong. 'Business procedures here', he said, 'can be immensely frustrating. Letters don't get answered, simple decisions take weeks to make, and everyone is obsessed with face. You need a lot of patience, and you never quite know where you are. Offices are overstaffed: Parkinson's law really applies here. Everyone is putting endless memos into circulation, and thinking up reasons why this or that cannot be done.'

Why, in that case, had the Japanese economy done so well? 'Oh,' he said, 'the Japanese are good at producing things, and at improving on other people's ideas. And their Ministry of Finance has done a brilliant job. But try to sell here and you will find yourself caught in an astonishingly costly and inefficient system. Your stuff will pass through the hands of a trading company and three or four wholesalers before reaching the retail outlet — and by the time everyone has taken his cut the price will be boosted beyond recognition. High-pressure salesmanship and all-out competition are for some reason frowned upon. And they disapprove of people who try to lure staff away from a rival. Heaven help your exporters if the Japanese ever manage to get *really* efficient.'

The most widely-aired criticism, I found on my trips, is that

the Japanese are indecisive. 'They spend literally hundreds of tedious hours at conference tables, drinking thousands of cups of tea and coffee and thousands of glasses of soft drinks,' a British resident told me. 'No one ever seems willing to take responsibility for anything, or even to let the majority decide. At the end you may end up with what you firmly believe is a final agreement — only it turns out, weeks later, that it isn't final at all. Someone has raised another point and the whole deal has been shelved. Even after contracts have been signed you may sometimes discover that nothing is done to implement them.'

The Japanese themselves, of course, tend to argue that their methods only look inefficient by Western standards. 'This is the way we do things,' they say, 'and you can see for yourself that we get results.' They agree that, on paper, our methods often look better. Japanese industrialists, they point out, devote much time and energy to studying Western techniques. But they insist one cannot make direct comparisons. Japanese methods produce benefits in the form of loyalty, discipline and co-operation which, it is argued, more than make up for the disadvantages.

There is a lot in this kind of reasoning. It would certainly be churlish not to acknowledge the many pleasant examples of real Japanese efficiency — the superb trains, the ably managed hotels and restaurants, the highly organised industrial plants, and the Government's competent economic planning methods. Group loyalty may produce over-manning and other wasteful practices — but it also produces hard work and pride in the achievements of the team.

The system is, however, heavily dependent on continued growth. Japan, more than any other nation except Germany, has enjoyed favourable conditions for several decades and many Japanese have come to take them for granted. But times are changing, even for the nation of economic miracles. With the young more restless, the future may look very different.

Meanwhile, the Westerner who hopes to do business in Japan had better get used to the fact that their traditions, and attitudes, are not the same as ours. He may never personally come across some of the really way-out practices, such as the singing of company hymns, and the application of off-beat industrial

psychiatry. (One company uses Madame-Tussaud-type curved mirrors which allow people with inferiority complexes to look like giants and cut the arrogant ones down to size. Another has the President's face painted on punchbags, and invites employees to release their feelings of frustration.) But the foreigner will find plenty to bewilder him — from the exaggerated courtesy, which makes one feel that no one ever says what he thinks, to the Japanese businessman's enthusiasm for sealing the deal by going on a mad binge.

If I had to compile a list of dos and don'ts myself, based on personal experience, I would include the following:

DON'T tell them how much better you do things at home, even though it may be true.

DO arm yourself with an impressive title: Japan is one of the most status-conscious nations in the world. Anything with 'executive' in it should do the trick, but if your comapny is planning to form a long-term association with a Japanese firm try to persuade your chairman, or president, to make at least one personal visit. It's worth a lot of face — and it should make it easier, in years to come, to convince head office that techniques which work at home won't necessarily be effective in Japan.

DO take plenty of visiting cards (they are mad about them) and get your secretary to have your name and title printed in Japanese on the back.

DON'T try to adopt the Japanese code wholesale: you will never make it and the chances are that your efforts will cause embarrassment. They *expect* you to be different. How would you feel if a Japanese visitor wore a bowler hat, addressed you as 'old man', and suggested a spot of lunch at his club? Well then.

DON'T try to entertain Japanese contacts at a Tokyo nightclub unless you have a very understanding accountant at head office: you certainly can't expect understanding (let alone help) from the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

DON'T worry if your Japanese guests make an awful noise when they eat their soup. It doesn't mean they hate your food; on the contrary it is considered a sincere token of appreciation.

Times, as I have said, are changing. Japan has become a lot

more outward-looking and pragmatic. Even the older generation of self-made men has proved eminently adaptable. I once went to see Soichiro Honda, who started his business in a seventeen-feet by eighteen-feet shack built in a war-devastated medium-sized city in central Japan. An American-educated PR man collected me in a swish car and took me to the company's research institute on the outskirts of Tokyo. When we got there, I was surprised to see the entrance draped with a Union Jack and a large message in gold letters over the door — 'Welcome Mr. Davis'. I gathered that this was one of Honda's favourite gimmicks; the PR man explained that he keeps flags of every nation — except, of course, Red China and the Iron Curtain countries — to greet foreign visitors. I was shown into a small room and given a moment to study a large notice on the wall. It was headed Management Policy and listed five points: proceed always with ambition and youthfulness; respect sound theory, develop fresh ideas, and make the most effective use of time; enjoy your work and always brighten your working atmosphere; strive constantly for a harmonious flow of work; be ever mindful of the value of research and endeavour.

There was a polite knock on the door and Honda came in, dressed in overalls. We discussed some of his unorthodox views on Japanese attitudes. The general worship of educational qualifications, for example. 'I am not impressed by diplomas,' he said. 'They don't do the work. I went to a technical high school, but was dismissed. I was twenty-eight when I joined, and had already held down a job. I attended only the classes I wanted to go to. Other students memorised the lessons, but I compared them with my practical experience. My marks were not as good as those of others, and I did not take the final examination. The principal called me in and said I had to leave. I told him I didn't want a diploma. It had less value than a cinema ticket. A ticket at least guaranteed that you would get in. A diploma guaranteed nothing.'

Education, said Honda, was important. But he disliked people who felt superior because they went to college. I asked him how he felt about the Japanese seniority system, under which promotion is governed by length of service rather than merit. He said he hated it. 'I promote by ability. Many people take pride in saying, at their retirement ceremony, that they

had got through their working lives without making mistakes. I prefer them to say that they made many errors, but always tried to advance. People who never made mistakes simply did what their bosses told them to do. They are not the kind I want.'

What qualities did he look for? 'First,' he said, 'I try to find out what a man is good at, and whether he has ideas of his own. Then I assess whether he can get along with others. A man must have self-confidence, but he must be modest enough to learn from others.'

Honda thought that profits should be shared fairly between employees and management ('one has to strive for higher profits so that both the company and its workers can progress'). He approved of expense account living providing that it helped the company, but considered it unfair for bosses to throw around money earned collectively. He did not believe in long business lunches himself, and his night life was 'under the control of Mrs. Honda'. He laughed uproariously at his own joke, but became serious again when I asked him whether he believed in firing inefficient people. His answer was strictly conformist. 'Some people are efficient, others less so. Firing a man creates a serious social problem. If someone proves inefficient, I give him an assignment where he can use his limited capacity to the maximum. Dismissal is possible only when someone causes serious damage and loss to the company, or in the case of a very serious moral wrong.'

Did he think it was possible for a brilliant young man to repeat his success story? 'When I started a knowledge of machinery was enough. Today everything is so terribly complicated and the competition is tremendous. So it would be a lot more difficult.' What advice would he give to his sons?' 'Simply to do what they would like to do. One must be happy at work. That's the most important thing of all.'

Honda is hardly typical of Japanese businessmen, but his views are increasingly shared by many young executives. Western visitors will have to make up their own minds which piece of evidence — verbal or otherwise — to trust. I will always remember the cashier at a splendid traditional Japanese restaurant, although provided with the most up-to-date IBM adding machine, worked out my bill on an abacus — and then told the smiling kimono-clad waitress to go out and get me a

taxi. But I also recall being impressed by the choice of books provided by the management of my hotel: the New Testament, the Teaching of Buddha, and the Japanese Trade Directory. For all its (sometimes irritating) love of the past, no one could reasonably deny that Japan is, and will remain, a country of the future.

It's possible that your business may also take you to a European Communist country at some time or another. I have made two extended trips to the Soviet Union — once to write a series for the London *Evening Standard* on business life behind the Iron Curtain — and it may be useful to offer a few observations.

I have already mentioned the pitfalls presented by a feature which is common to most Communist countries: the shortage of hard currency. There is invariably a black market in dollars, pounds, francs and West German marks and you are quite likely to be approached at some time during your stay. The offer to do a favourable deal may come from an ordinary citizen prepared to risk the heavy penalties involved in the game, but it could also come from an *agent provocateur*. It's obviously difficult for a foreign visitor to tell the difference: the golden rule is to resist temptation.

There is rarely any limit to the amount of foreign currency one can take into a Communist country, but the same cannot be said of the money you take out. You will usually be given exchange slips which you are expected to keep and, if called upon to do so, produce at the airport or frontier when you leave. In practice the checking-up process tends to fall somewhat short of official requirements, but every bureaucrat is liable to have bouts of excessive zeal.

Business is usually done with representatives of State Trading Companies. They are Government officials with a carefully laid down code of conduct, so they won't necessarily share your views and enthusiasm. In Moscow I sat in on some lengthy discussions between British businessmen and half a dozen Soviet bureaucrats. One of the Britons asked if they were interested in importing wine. The Russians said that the Soviet Union produced wine of its own, but that they would take some whisky if Britain bought more vodka. This insistence on ex-

change deals (again inspired by shortage of hard currency) is very common. The British businessman went on to ask if he would be allowed to publicise his product. No, the Russians said, they would do that themselves. At which the visitor gave a shrug and said that if he couldn't advertise in Russia there was no point in trying to break into the market.

Some of the Britons — myself included — were more than a little puzzled by the Russian passion for fixing highly ambitious targets. The man in charge of vodka explained that last year they had exported 42,000 litres to the United Kingdom. This year it would be 250,000 litres. When I asked why he expected such a big incresse he looked surprised. That was just a target figure. Last year the target had been 450,000. The fact that experience shows some targets to be unrealistic seems to make little difference to this odd but widespread habit; a high target, it is argued, is a constant spur to all involved and therefore a good thing.

Old hands quickly learn to distinguish between optimistic political clap-trap about trade opportunities and the true position. They also recognise that the Russians are touchy about delivery dates: many a businessman has found that, after shortening his dates at Russian insistence in order to clinch a deal, strict penalty clauses have been invoked when he couldn't keep his promise. If you look for sympathy because your employees have a strike — forget it. Strikes are unnecessary, the head of the railway union explained to me with a straight face. Since there is no private ownership in the Soviet Union there is no one to strike against; the interests of the unions and the State are one.

Given this differential in attitudes and methods, to say nothing of the complex regulations governing all trade with the outside world it obviously makes sense to find out as much as possible beforehand. Whitehall is helpful and so, I have found, are the commercial officers at British Embassies. The British Overseas Trade Board publishes a series of pamphlets on Communist countries, complied with the assistance of embassy officials, and they provide at least some indication of the kind of pitfalls one is likely to encounter. The pamphlet on Bulgaria, for example, tells us to remember that a nod of the head means *No* and a shake of the head *Yes*. Which can save both embar-

rassment and possible financial loss. The pamphlet on Poland warns that:

'The main Polish meal of the day is *obiad*, consumed at about 15.00 hours or later, and Polish Foreign Trade Enterprise and State organisations do not close for lunch in the middle of the day as is the custom in most European countries.'

So make sure, comrades, that you have a hearty breakfast. And if your next stop is Yugoslavia remember that you will be offered brandy, coffee or fruit juice which it is impolite to refuse. In Czechoslovakia the practise of religion is tolerated and in Romania minor advertising gifts of small value are welcomed.

Customs formalities are often every bit as complex as the aforementioned currency regulations. Poland, for instance, expects you to tell the customs officer which articles in your possession are intended to be taken away from Poland on your departure. Typewriters, calculators, tape-recorders and other helpmates all have to be entered on a special form — and if you *lose* that form during your stay you forfeit the right to take out the currency and the articles. East Germany (like most other Communist countries) will let you take in newspapers, magazines and printed material *providing* the contents do not contravene GDR regulations or cause offence. Offence to *whom*? Ah, comrades, there you have me. *Playboy* is widely banned because it upsets old ladies and *The Daily Telegraph* is frowned upon because it may corrupt the young. *The Financial Times* will probably be borrowed by your business contacts but may well offend the idealistic border guard.

All the pamphlets warn you to apply for your visa well in advance and indeed this can sometimes prove the most irritating formality of all. Businessmen accustomed to taking off for some foreign destination at short notice may find themselves waiting for weeks, if not months, before they finally secure approval to visit the workers' paradise. It took me six months to get a visa for my first trip to the Soviet Union because, quite simply, no one wanted to make a decision. Western journalists may write things, after their return, which might conceivably upset Higher Authority. The journalists themselves are out of reach so there is only one other possible reaction. *Who let these people in?* The rules of survival dictate that

it shouldn't be you, so you push the application into the next in-tray.

On my second visit, some years later, the visa came through in a few days because I had been invited by *Krokodil*, the Soviet humour magazine. They, not the Embassy or the Foreign Ministry in Moscow, assumed responsibility. Communist bureaucracy is less frightened of businessmen than of journalists, but a letter of invitation still saves a lot of time and annoyance. It's also advisable to ensure that the validity of your passport extends for at least three months from the date of issue of your visa — and, perhaps most important of all, that you cannot be held to qualify as a local citizen. Communist countries have their own ideas about these things and any U.K. resident with local connections, e.g. by birth, marriage or descent, may have dual citizenship without knowing it. There could be problems when it's time to leave.

Embassy officials with long experience of Communist ways say that businessmen need, above all, patience. Some deals are done in three days but more often than not it takes up to three years. Correspondence tends to go unanswered and there are often long delays between initial talks and the final discussions leading to a contract — reflecting, again, the general reluctance to take decisions. Regular sales visits are needed to keep abreast of developments and new requirements, and the visitor may never actually see the factory or distributor who finally handles his product. Both sides, moreover, have their own way of drawing up contracts and there may be long and exhausting arguments before a compromise solution is agreed. Defaults in payment are virtually unknown, but delays are not unusual.

Communist countries nowadays allow some form of local representation, and governments have become increasingly keen on joint ventures with foreign firms. Several well-known British and American companies are involved in manufacturing enterprises in the Soviet Union itself. All the indications are that this kind of thing will grow. Meantime, though, it pays to be cautious — and realistic.

Krokodil, I might add, has a good deal of fun with time-wasting officials and indecisive bureaucrats. Readers' complaints about pompous officials, corrupt shopkeepers, shoddy products and countless other irritations are followed up, and if

they prove to be justified the magazine uses its own brand of attacking satire to cut the offenders down to size. Any small-time official picked on for backsliding is always named and usually denounced. Punishment in the form of demotion frequently follows.

The editor maintains that, as the bureaucratic set-up *is* the Government, *Krokodil* can be regarded as a vigorous opponent of the State machine. Since the attacks stop at a certain level this is debatable, but one only has to spend a few days in the Soviet Union to see why he likes this side of his job. For most Russians the real oppressor is not some shadowy figure in the Kremlin, but the little dictator strutting about in a scruffy office down the road. The inefficiency of central buying and selling organisations, and of anything remotely connected with the service industries is equally notorious. If you eat in a Moscow hotel, you must be prepared to wait half an hour or more before you are handed the menu, and even a simple lunch takes at least two hours. It is a formidable challenge to one's sense of humour, but *Krokodil* does its best to raise a laugh. It jokes about Moscow's interminable queues ('You even have to queue to get into a queue', the editor said to me), of the muddle which is invariably produced by the onset of winter, or the annual confusion over the marketing of apples, and of the difficulty of getting spares for state-produced goods like tractors and TV sets. One regular gag shows hardware coming off the assembly line and being carried straight over the road to a shop labelled 'Repairs'. There are cartoons about drunkenness — a major problem in the Soviet Union — and about Moscow's chronic housing shortage. The editor's own favourite story, or so he said, was one about the traveller from Moscow who arrives in a small town and asks whether there is any night life. 'Yes, there is,' the hotel receptionist informs him. 'But she's ill today.'

Krokodil doesn't criticise the Kremlin, and the visitor is kindly asked to keep his voice down when the conversation gets around to tricky subjects like freedom. People make jokes about their leaders, of course, but they are never repeated on radio or in the press. Nor would any writer mock the absurd passion for plastering ideological slogans all over the place. ('Comrades! Fulfil the five-year plan before 1980!') Privately,

Russians swap all kinds of anecdotes. There is, for example, the story of the two peasants who've been to see Lenin's embalmed body in the Red Square mausoleum. 'Just like us,' says one to the other. 'Dead but not yet buried.'

Government propaganda becomes much less obtrusive once you leave Moscow. This is one of the reasons why I found Leningrad a lot more pleasant. And there is even less sign of it in Tiflis, the Georgian capital. I flew there, via Kiev, to talk to the editors of the local humour magazine. Georgians are highly sensitive people, proud of their country and not particularly renowned for their sense of humour. They are the butt of many unpublished Russian jokes, but my companion from *Krokodil* took care not to pass them on. Sample: a slow-witted, slow-moving Georgian finds himself in Berlin as part of a delegation. He disappears on the first day and doesn't return until the evening. 'Where have you been?' the others ask. 'Well,' he says, 'when I was here in 1945 our major ordered me to blow up a bridge . . .'

It was in Gori, Stalin's birthplace, that I had what will probably be my most unforgettable experience. We were inspecting the tiny house where Stalin saw his first red sunset, when the local police chief appeared, accompanied by several henchmen. He bared his gold teeth in a snarl, thumped his plain-clothed chest, and spat out a torrent of angry Georgian prose. I remembered the good advice I had collected back home. 'Don't tell Western jokes,' the *Director* magazine had said. 'Don't be as foolish as I was,' Gerald Brooke had told me. Now there I stood, far from home, faced with the moment of truth. And I'd forgotten to bring my overcoat. It would be cold in Siberia.

The chief was trembling with rage, and I could see myself eating dandelion soup and carving chessmen. Funny how important little things become when you are about to be deprived of them. No more Gillette blades, Alka-Seltzer, spaghetti Bolognese, and going to work on an egg. No more mini skirted dollies, *Times* leaders, special fried rice, bank holidays, and *Coronation Street*. What had I done? And who on earth was left in our gaols with any trade-in value?

One of the henchmen took a step towards me. 'Gamlet,' he said in Russian.

'Gamlet?'

'Da da, Gamlet,' he said, nodding vigorously. 'Shakespeare. Very good.'

My Moscow companion, who had been as puzzled as I was, looked relieved. The chief, he explained, was terribly fond of Shakespeare. He knew the whole of *Hamlet* off by heart, and I was the first Englishman he had ever met. So I had been treated to an extract. Now, the chief would do Mark Antony's funeral speech from *Julius Caesar*.

I offered the chief my hand and fulsome praise, and we went off to his house to continue the performance over a highly liquid lunch. I managed to chip in with 'To be or not to be', and the chief collapsed with laughter.

The Georgians are fond of toasts (drunk out of curved bull's horns which can't be put down until they are empty) and I don't remember much else about that afternoon. I'm sorry to say, though, that the episode had a somewhat unhappy sequence. I wrote a cheerful piece about his enthusiasm for the 'Bard' and it was brought to the attention of Higher Authority in Moscow. The chief was severely reprimanded and, according to *Krokodil*, deprived of his beautifully-bounded volumes of Shakespeare's works. His hero would have had a word for it.

CHAPTER TEN

MAKING A SALE

'EXPORTING is fun' announced Mr. Harold Macmillan when he was Prime Minister, and the slogan soon gained wide currency. Mr. Macmillan, of course, had never been an exporter himself. He knew nothing of the sheer drudgery which so often goes with the job — the lonely footslogging in a strange land, the strains on family life caused by long absences from home, the weary disappointment if the hoped-for contract fails to materialise. But he at least succeeded in giving export salesmen a little public glamour. Businessmen began to collect knighthoods and peerages for 'services to export' (although most of these went to chairmen who rarely left head office) and ministers happily accepted invitations to speak at banquets which, all too often, turned into tiresome orgies of self-praise.

Foreign journalists, who have always viewed the British honours system with a mixture of contempt and envy, expressed surprise at our sense of values. Why should a man be singled out for public honour — and his wife be turned into a lady — just because he managed to sell a few more cars to the Germans or Japanese? Why rate him more highly than painters, writers, composers and other creative citizens? They could have added that if one wants to boost exports a competitively valued currency is a lot more effective than the distribution of gongs; profit is still the main driving force. But some reassessment of the role of salesman was overdue. Many Britons have always been rather snobbish about salesmanship. They like to pretend that trade is really too vulgar a pastime for well-bred citizens.

And yet, all of us are salesmen. We sell products, ideas, attitudes, values and sentiments. The banker, lawyer or TV

performer sells his services; the factory worker sells his labour. There is no basic difference. We call people exporters rather than salesmen because it sounds so much more dignified. We talk of marketing rather than selling. The professions — lawyers, doctors, accountants — can't bear the thought that anyone should think of them as salesmen, and firmly resist suggestions that they should adopt modern methods of salesmanship. The Church would rather be without customers than take advice from Madison Avenue. And university graduates infinitely prefer the BBC, Whitehall, and even the army to a job which involves selling. Those who find themselves pushed into it try to soften the blow by devising a fancy title: one is not a salesman but a sales executive or sales co-ordinator.

Other nations — especially the Americans — generally find this rather puzzling. They are much more open about salesmanship, and tend to be irritated by our apparent reluctance to get down to brass tacks. American salesmen who come to London, boyishly eager to do a deal, can't see why we should be so coy. If they take a prospect (all customers are prospects) out to lunch or dinner they expect to talk about business and not the weather. If they make a direct proposition they expect a direct answer — today. And if selling a product means shouting from every rooftop in the country — well, goddam it, SHOUT. American showbiz stars are equally puzzled — and annoyed — by our apparent disapproval of anyone who seeks publicity. They have come to sell themselves, and their films, and they can't see why anyone should find it objectionable. When I first started to do TV shows in America, three or four years ago, I was once severely ticked off for neglecting to mention my 'product' — *Punch*. 'What,' a talk show host in New York demanded to know, 'is *wrong* with you British?' Visiting authors, persuaded by their American publishers that they won't sell a single copy unless they appear on radio and TV, find themselves with a gruelling schedule of up to six interviews a day. They start at dawn on the pre-breakfast show and often end well after midnight. 'Today's guest,' the anchorman will tell his audience, is 'William Davis. He is the Editor of *Punch*, the famous British humour magazine. But first remember new Skippy nuts are roasty toasty fresh. And Mountain Valley

Water in bottles from your local supermarket is untouched by pollution . . .'

Mr. Macmillan helped to change attitudes for the better and the process has continued since. Exporters collect fewer honours than they did a few years ago (which is perhaps as well) but salesmen have become more professional and their status has improved.

The government, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, gives a good deal of practical assistance to businessmen venturing abroad for the first time. Apart from its advisory services it also sponsors trade missions, trade fairs and 'British weeks'. Trade missions sometimes turn out to be little more than alcoholic binges, but they can be very useful to smaller firms who know little or nothing about a particular overseas market and cannot afford a permanent representative. The missions, made up of a dozen or more people in the same line of business, give their executives a chance to make on-the-spot assessments of sales potential at reasonable cost. They meet local officials and businessmen, look over factories and hear the views of the Embassy's commercial officer. The end result may be discouraging — people have frequently come back from such trips determined not to touch that particular market with a ten-foot pole — but they can also lead to profitable long-term relationships.

Trade fairs are showcases which allow companies to display their products to a new audience. They don't always produce a lot of business, and you risk giving competitors some profitable ideas, but they are a handy way of sharing costs and getting one's message across in a short period of time. Trade fairs, like missions, are especially popular in the Communist world, where they like to keep these things under one roof, but they also make a considerable impact in the West. Some are so vast — Expo is the most obvious example — that their value to an individual firm may be doubted. But there are countless others which are highly effective in bringing manufactured and buyer together. The annual trade fair in Hanover, Germany, is a good example. In publishing, the Frankfurt Book Fair is another.

'British weeks' are big store promotions gone berserk, spilling all over cities. They literally take over the place for seven

days. London Transport buses touring the sights. London cabs, 'lovable' London policemen, docile London horses pulling beer carts. Pipe bands and floats helping a flood of toffee-makers, tin whistle constructors, pork pie manufacturers. I find these occasions a source of embarrassment rather than pride, and I doubt if they produce really lasting benefits. Other countries mount similar extravaganzas in Britain and I have never met anyone who has been permanently converted to Bulgarian cheese, or Hungarian cornflakes, or Yugoslavian Riesling as a result. But stores like them, tourist authorities are glad to co-operate, and most firms who take part seem to be satisfied.

To collegues chained permanently to the office desk (and even more to workers at the factory bench) the salesman's life does, of course, appear to be pleasantly free. Salesmen do not punch time clocks. They come and go in company cars, dress well, run expense accounts, meet interesting people, see the world. But much of this freedom is illusory: it is hard to think of another job which calls for more hard work and self-discipline. A salesman out there in the field is running his own small business and his performance is judged much more directly — and critically — than that of the office manager or ledger clerk.

Not surprisingly there is, today, a large amount of how-to-do-it literature: in America sales handbooks even outnumber sex manuals. Some are full of the convoluted jargon which nowadays passes for expertise ('The insightful salesman', says one of these gems, 'uses spontaneity and listening skills as his major sales tools') but all try to make salesmanship excitingly positive. The most important thing, they agree, is that a salesman should have confidence in himself . . . 'it is hard to conceive of a pessimist in the job'. W. Clement Stone, author of a book called *Success through a Positive Mental Attitude*, claims the secret is to keep telling yourself how marvellous you are. 'Have you ever thought of the battles you won before you were born? Just think: tens of thousands of sperm cells participated in a great battle, yet only one of them won — and that one is you!' He also suggests that you sit down and write yourself a letter, telling the things you always intended to do as though they have already been accomplished — some personal, some

charitable, and others community projects. 'Write the letter as if a biographer were writing about the wonderful person you really are when you come under the influence of PMA. But don't stop there. Use the secret of getting things done. Respond to the self-starter DO IT NOW.'

A word or two about this self-starter thing. Mr. Stone sets great store by it. Whenever the symbol 'Do it now!' is flashed from your subconscious to your conscious mind, he says, *act* immediately; with practise you will develop a reflect response so powerful that you will take action come what may. He doesn't explain what happens if your subconscious mind runs amok and tells you to rob a bank; I would like it to be known that, if this should happen, *I* cannot be held responsible.

Mr. Stone tells the story of Jerry Asam, a descendant of the Hawaiian Kings who got hooked on inspirational books and became a crack salesman. His secret? Halfway through a frustrating day he shouted 'I feel healthy! I feel happy! I feel terrific!' Two hours later he had made three sales — and again he repeated 'I feel healthy! I feel happy! I feel terrific!' About 11 p.m. that night he was tired — but was he happy!

Another book, *Insightful Management*, says the salesman survives, first and foremost, by using his 'people sense. He strives to please and to win people's affection, to sell himself to them. Their buying affirms his person. His esteem rests largely with them. He gains feelings of importance from being useful, needed, and wanted . . .'

European manuals, predictably, tend to be less effusive. But they also command an enthusiastic following and I dare say they have helped to make many people more successful. I am bound to say, though, that Jerry Asam's technique doesn't do much for me. A bottle of champagne tends to work better when I have a frustrating day.

One essential asset, on a trip abroad, is the ability to make effective use of one's time. I know businessmen who rush from one useless appointment to another, determined to cram more meetings into the day than anyone else. Ask them, at the end of the trip, what they have achieved and they look hurt. They've had three dozen meetings. No, they haven't actually sold anything, but they are going to be able to write an absolutely splendid report. More careful advance preparation, and a little more

concentration on key prospects, would have produced far better results.

In America the mania for meetings now extends to 'working breakfasts'. Visitors are liable to be summoned for eggs, bacon and serious business talk at 7 or 8 a.m. It may be your best time, but it is more likely to be the hour at which the other fellow is at his sharpest. Before you know it he has you agreeing to do exactly what he wants. I much prefer that other, more civilised American institution, brunch, and I usually try to sidestep breakfast invitations. But, of course, there are times when you simply can't refuse. I was once asked to come to an 8 a.m. breakfast with David Rockefeller, the head of Chase Manhattan Bank. It was the only free moment in his crowded diary and I accepted with alacrity. But there is one obvious rule which, alas, frequently tends to get ignored. Don't go on a binge the night before. You may think you can handle it, but you will almost certainly be below par — and it will show.

Even the most bright-eyed, hard-working, insightful businessman will sometimes have an unproductive trip. So it may be helpful to offer a few comments on what the late Stephen Potter called losemanship.

Looking at the multitude of warriors charging up the slope at him, General Custer is said to have turned resignedly to his aide and announced: 'Well, it's better than going back to North Dakota.' I can't swear that's true (my own favourite Last Message has him shouting 'Take no prisoners!') but at least the story makes him that comparative rarity: a Good Loser.

People seldom talk about their failures — for, you may say, obvious reasons. Yet the British have always admired losers. It is no accident that Guy Fawkes had a day named after him, while Nelson, Wellington and Churchill haven't even got five minutes to call their own. And there is really nothing quite like the Dunkirk spirit; the Americans don't have the 'Pearl Harbor spirit' or the French the 'Waterloo spirit'. Success may command, but it's failure which inspires affection.

Well, that's the theory anyway. Get some comfort from it if you can, but try not to tell others about your troubles if you can help it: half your listeners don't want to hear about them and the other half are glad you got what was coming to you anyway.

There are, however, times when people can't help noticing

that you've slipped. What you need, on these occasions, is a Good Excuse. One obvious but usually effective ploy is to pretend that you have meant to lose all along. 'Contract? I didn't go to Germany to get a *contract*. It was just an exploratory trip.' Or you can hint that, although you didn't actually get an order, Something Big is in the pipeline. Better to wait for that than to push for something small. You can also, of course, tell colleagues that the Japanese rival offered better terms and delivery dates — it's not your fault that these dreadful foreigners can get away with employing slave labour.

The Chinese are experts at saving face and I, for one, am an avid student of their methods. There's a splendid story of a Chinese who thought himself good at chess. One day he played three games with his opponent and lost every one. A friend asked him how many he had played and he said three. And what happened? 'I didn't win the first game, and my opponent didn't lose the second. I wanted to draw the third game, but he didn't agree. That's all.'

Russia and other Iron Curtain countries also find themselves confronted, from time to time, with the formidable problem of explaining — and, if possible, justifying — the lapses of their leaders. When Khrushchev took on Eisenhower at golf during the cold war, *Pravda* is said to have announced the next day:

AMAZING TRIUMPH FOR PREMIER

In a match with the President of the United States Mr. Khrushchev, playing golf for the first time, came second. The American president was next to last.

It shouldn't be too difficult to devise some variations of your own. If all else fails lock the gun away, flush the aspirins down the loo, send the wife out shopping, and get roaring drunk. It won't solve your problems, but it will give you some interesting new ones.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

HIGH LIFE

SUCCESSFUL or not, the business traveller is bound to attract a certain amount of envy. It's hard to convince people who are bogged down in routine that foreign travel is anything but glamorous. And, of course, the envy is often justified. There are senior executives who devote much of their working life to keeping in touch with other executives abroad; not for them the vulgar business of selling. There are others who spend three months of the year inspecting overseas subsidiaries in sunny climes; not for them the rigours of a European winter. And there are some who take their families abroad to study the conditions on behalf of an indulgent Board of Directors. And why not? Too many wealthy and successful businessmen allow themselves to become prisoners of the machine they have created. Wives and children (who, wisely, are more relaxed) are despatched to far-away places while Daddy serves his sentence. The irony is that most companies would be better run if the boss gave himself more time to think, took better care of his health, and allowed fellow executives to prove their ability. Weariness leads to bad decisions, and too close involvement with day-to-day affairs leaves little room for vision.

The emphasis throughout this book has been on travel by air because it is, for most of us, the most effective way to get around. But I know many businessmen who prefer to make at least half the journey by sea. The people who write brochures and advertising copy for shipping companies certainly make it sound tempting. 'Sharp and salty scent of sea ... gleam of flying fish caught in a midday sun ... featherlight breeze that quickens expectation ...'

Cunard offers a five-day trip on the *Queen Elizabeth II*, with

return by sea or British Airways. Each day, it points out, has twenty-five hours because the clocks go back one hour every night. You arrive New York time, rested and refreshed. Meanwhile there is breakfast in bed, coffee break at 11 a.m. ('over coffee have a go at the ship's Totaliser; guess how many miles the QE2 covered yesterday'), and cocktail time at noon. If you fancy a bit of peace and quiet, 'try *War and Peace* in the library — just 2 out of 2,500 volumes we carry on board'. If you are bored, go to the pictures, swim in one of the four pools, or 'visit Eric Mason, our masseur'. In the evening it's cocktails again, followed by dinner. Then it's back to cocktails. Or a show. Or roulette and blackjack in the Sportsmen's Club. Or dancing in the Night Club.

Can one become an alcoholic in five days? I wouldn't know, but it might be fun to try. I do know, though, that your twenty-five-hour day is likely to call for a well-padded expense account. And that it might just possibly prove a little difficult to convince your chairman of the need for such prolonged exposure to 'the sharp and salty scent of the sea'.

Businessmen who move in sufficiently exalted circles may also be tempted, from time to time, to discuss deals on a yacht. Next to the corporate jet this is the ultimate status symbol, designed to impress associates, clients and fellow tycoons. The owner will, of course, apologise for putting you to so much trouble — a gambit you are not expected to take seriously. Relax, if you can, and enjoy the caviar and champagne. But be on your guard; don't let opulence sway your judgment. Personally I can't stand yachts, unless they are about the size of the *Queen Elizabeth*, and nothing could make me talk business while the damn thing bobs up and down like a yo-yo. There is nothing more embarrassing, for the host as well as the victim, than a guest who is susceptible to *mal de mer*.

Some yachts never move out of harbour. Well, hardly ever. At the height of the season the harbour of Cannes and other fashionable watering places is packed with floating cocktail parties. The host might make an occasional foray to St. Tropez, but in the main he will be content to stay where guests are plentiful and everyone can admire his expensive status symbol. The basic qualifications in a guest are few: a sizeable capacity for drink, a stomach that doesn't mind being tossed about a bit,

an adequate stock of small-talk, and a total lack of interest in whatever happens on the bridge or in the wheel house. (If there is one thing every owner dislikes it's being upstaged by some smart know-all, even if he *has* spent twenty years in the Navy.) It also helps to have a title or, failing that, to be an accomplished name-dropper. I know one Italian aristocrat who is swamped with invitations every year because he once knew the Duke of Windsor. You will naturally be expected to hate socialists; much of the conversation on board will centre around the shocking state of business confidence and total lack of fiscal incentive.

Given a choice of yacht or corporate jet I'd take the plane every time. And it doesn't even have to have a revolving bed or a complement of Bunnies. It's enough just to be able to by-pass airport waiting rooms. The business aircraft, manufacturers insist, is more than a company amenity — it's a productive industrial tool, an instrument of management, a spur to dynamic selling. Well, that's all right by me. Hawker Siddeley sales literature has dramatised the folly of paying a man £20,000 a year to sit around in an airport lounge with a lot of delayed honeymooners. The other manufacturers concur. Give the man an executive jet, with 'weather-topping capability', 'dictation quiet', 'sea-level comfort at 30,000 feet', an 'in-flight dressing room' (and even shower), and get your money's worth out of him. Spare him the frustration of common travellers, protect him from telephone calls, or, if we are talking about America, give him an in-flight telephone and let him harry the groundlings with it.

Britain's pioneer company aircraft was the De Havilland Dove, which was in production for twenty-one years. Some five hundred and fifty were built and many are still operational. But the emphasis has increasingly shifted to more expensive executive jets. Ordering an aircraft is often like ordering a yacht. The customer decides the interior lay-out, specifying a boardroom plan or otherwise, choosing decor and colour schemes. One owner has a couple of Picassos in his aircraft. American buyers like the exterior of the fuselage to be as anonymous as possible. This is in order not to inflame shareholders, but for whom the business aircraft market might have expanded faster.

A firm which cannot afford to buy its own plane may oc-

casionally want to hire one. This is by no means difficult in Western Europe; even political parties do it during hectic election campaigns. A number of operators in different capital cities offer a package deal which includes, in addition to the aircraft itself, arrangements like car hire and hotel bookings. British Airways also has a helicopter charter service, based at Gatwick Airport. It can reach any pick-up point in the London area within fifteen minutes; it can also meet the arrivals of private executive jets at any U.K. airport. Since the helicopter is not restricted to operating out of conventional airfields, landings can be made almost anywhere — car parks, sports fields, even your own back garden. 'Only the helicopter', British Airways points out, 'has the inherent ability to land you right on the spot for your sales conference or business meeting, and enables your visiting customers and VIP's to reach your factory or Head Office in style and comfort.'

It certainly beats that more mundane (but, inevitably, more common) form of transport, the train. Some trains are extremely comfortable and well equipped (with prices to match) and on short domestic journeys they may well get one there faster than a plane. Driving to and from airports can, after all, take up a good deal of time and trains are generally better placed to cope with bad weather. The food may be superior and the scenery certainly will be. Trains are also safer than cars, especially in countries where everyone likes to be another Fangio. I have been on marvellous trains in America, Italy and Britain and can see why some people say it's their favourite form of travel. But long trips are both tiring and tiresome. The word sleeper is, for me, a misnomer — I have never yet managed to sleep more than a few minutes on any train, despite generous consumption of alcohol. Watch a group of businessmen on a six-hour train journey and you see tedium gradually taking control. They start by chatting about work, or reading, or playing cards, or admiring the landscape. But after a couple of hours of this they've had enough. There is nothing more to say, nothing more to do. They sit there, weary and morose, waiting for the whole business to end.

There are times, I accept, when it's difficult to find a reasonable alternative method of getting from A to B. The best companions on those occasions are probably a good thriller and a

substantial hip flask. Fellow passengers may talk nonsense or, worse, begin to snore, and it is clearly a good idea to get a compartment all to yourself. Vivian Stanshall has devised an almost infallible method of securing that worthy objective, and I know he won't mind if I give you the gist of it. 'Try,' he says, 'to frighten and disgust as many people as you can before even boarding the train. At the turnstile, or the platform, make a few afflicted gestures, be *really* unusual. I find that slapping the back of my neck and hopping is a winner, if you keep it up. Smile and apologise, pointing to the skull.' Once in the train 'throw your suitcase/briefcase/handbag/nosebag on to seat nearest corridor, dispense other baggage/paper/bowlers/umbrellas on to every other. Light up a pipe if you can. The trick is to multiply yourself as many times as possible.' Stanshall claims that after practising at home with six ordinary armchairs he has improved his distribution technique to such a pitch of perfection that he can make himself quite enormous under average conditions in 4.03 secs. And if he can do it, so can you.

Driving long distances can be just as tedious, especially if you confine yourself to motorways. In America you can push a button which will keep your automatic car cruising at a steady 70 m.p.h. for hour after hour; the main problem (and it can be formidable) is how to stay awake. But the driver can at least make whatever stops or side-trips take his fancy. He is much more likely, if he gives himself time, to get to know the country he is travelling in and to meet the local people. The same goes for buses and coaches, but such plebeian means of transport are happily outside the orbit of our cosy expense account world. Teenage sons and daughters occasionally bring back harrowing tales of life on the road and I suppose it's possible that you may, at some time or another, come across some of the travel books devoted to the Under Twenty-Fives. They will give you 'facts about the fuzz' and offer tips on modifying your freaky mien before entering some countries. They will also tell you how to live for nothing. London, says one of these guides, is 'dotted with greens and churchyards where you can kip down if you're quick enough getting out of sight and quiet after you do'. If you want to relax during the day, 'hotel lounges are best equipped with comfortable chairs and magazines. You don't

have to pretend you are staying there, just waiting for someone who is.' If you get hungry, 'hang around bars of big hotels as though waiting for someone and eat the nuts.'

The late Kenneth Allsop called it a 'sort of children's crusade in pursuit of holy poverty', and quoted one disillusioned crusader as saying that most of these books don't really tell you what it's all about.

> They don't tell you that you'll get water sprayed at you from passing cars; that those 60-ton trucks give their pneumatic brakes a squeeze and blow a raspberry at you as they pass; that drivers slow down so that you can grab your rucksack and start running, when they accelerate away jeering; that although there's a marvellous comradeship on the road, a sharing of money and food, you move through a very cold and hostile environment; that 60 per cent of hitching is pure bloody misery — nowhere to sleep except benches and telephone kiosks, nowhere to wash, and starving most of the time.

Surprised? Not me. Airlines and the Hilton may fall short of perfection, but I appreciate my comforts. It's one very good reason why I distrust that over-used word unspoiled. It often means that there is no electricity, little water, lots of mosquitos, undrinkable wine, boring food, primitive ablutions and camp beds as hard as rock. I can do without television and newspapers, but I can't do without soft beds, clean sheets, showers, good food, cold beer, and the occasional bottle of champagne. At least I don't see why I should. They are the things I like to come back to after an active day on the sea, or a long walk in the hills. The 'marvellous comradeship' sounds appealing but I'd rather share my money and food with just one comrade — preferably young, shapely and blonde.

Which brings me, I suppose, to the subject of friendships. Travelling is said to be a great way of making new friends, and indeed I know people who have built up an impressive collection. Tell them that you are going to Chicago, or Rome, or Frankfurt and they instantly produce their telephone book. 'You *must*,' they insist, 'look up my old friend Irving, or Mario, or Hans.' You gratefully accept the offer and dial the

number as soon as you've checked into the hotel. It's only when your cheerful greeting is met by an embarrassed silence, and your repeated mention of the helpful collector's name elicits nothing more than the question 'who?', that you realise your mistake. For friend read acquaintance, and probably casual acquaintance at that.

Sometimes the use of the word is merely careless, or perhaps a good turn is thought to have bought lasting gratitude. At other times though, it is unscrupulously used by people who are on the make and take. 'My best friend', wrote Aristotle, 'is the man who in wishing me well wishes it for my sake.' Which probably leaves out the majority of business friendships.

Journalists are good at making instant friends because their job demands it. Along with his passport and typewriter every foreign correspondent packs a metaphorical make-a-friend kit. When you land — and it's usually because there's trouble — you are in dire need of a friend. He, and he alone, can tell you all the local gossip in thirty minutes, fix appointments which would normally be impossible to get, and help you to meet the ridiculous deadlines set by the editor back home. The very least you can do, in return, is to help him forget his troubles over a bottle or two and promise that, if he should ever find himself in London, you will repay your debt with interest. A week later you find yourself somewhere else and, if necessary, pledge eternal friendship to another stranger.

Most of these working relationships — which is what they really are — tend to be forgotten the moment you return home. But every journalist (and, I dare say, businessman) has been called to account at least once. You are sitting at home watching TV, after an exhausting day at the office, when the telephone rings. 'Hi there, John (or Bill or David), this is Hank. Just got in . . .' The standard English response is to play it cool. 'Oh, er, hello Hank. How about a drink sometime — say, a week next Wednesday?'

Americans, bless them, are infinitely more hospitable and therefore find this kind of treatment hard to take. The least you can do is to take them out to dinner, invite them for the weekend, or accompany them on a tour of Westminster Abbey or the Tower of London. But friendship requires a stronger base: shared interests and attitudes, genuine liking or admiration,

and pleasure in each other's company. And even if *you* hit it off there is no guarantee that your wives will feel the same. Indeed, they may hate each other on sight.

It's worse, of course, if the other fellow sends along people you have never met and wouldn't care to meet — or if, as sometimes happens, their rebellious teenage children turn up on your doorstep. It's unreasonable to expect you to find them homes and jobs, or to vouch for them, but you may be asked to do it all the same. The real test of friendship, after all, is whether you are willing to put up with inconvenience and embarrassment. There is no easy answer to this. I have gladly helped some people — partly to repay a debt and partly because it gave me personal satisfaction — and I would not hesitate to do so again. But there are obviously times when loyalty to older friends (and concern for your integrity) outweigh other considerations. The logical course is to be polite but firm — and to be rather more sparing with your promises on your next trip, no matter how congenial the company and how plentiful the booze.

This goes every bit as much for colleagues who may be travelling with you, and charming young ladies you may meet along the way, as for Hank and his free-wheeling kids. Colleagues can be good company and there is nothing like travel to throw people together. But this particular form of comradeship, so pleasant when you are both in a strange country, has a nasty habit of turning sour afterwards. It's amazing how many businessmen — so cautious at home — get reckless the moment they board that plane. They talk about their frustrations and ambitions, discuss family problems which ought to be kept confidential, and generally behave as if their companion is a combination of dear friend and psychiatrist. Perhaps he is — but he may just as easily be a rival who can't wait to make use of all that indiscreet chatter as soon as you get back to the office.

The charming young ladies may prove equally callous. They may very well expect more from your casual relationship than you are willing to give; indeed you may have encouraged them in that joyful expectation. So what do you do if she writes loving letters to your home address — or, God forbid, turns up without warning?

When I first went to Moscow I became friendly (in a strictly

professional sense) with the resident correspondent of a British national paper. Over dinner, one evening, he told me that he'd got himself into a desperate situation. Foreign correspondents were discouraged from fraternising with Russian girls and one of his early relationships had been abruptly terminated by the authorities. So he had been compelled to settle for one of the rather plain girls employed at the British embassy. Conscious of her bargaining position she had extracted a promise of marriage before she agreed to share his bed, and the wedding was fixed for next week. He couldn't think of a less suitable life companion — so what the hell was he to do? I told him to run — a facile but useless piece of advice. He managed to postpone the wedding, but they were married some months later — and divorced two years after that.

'There is,' some travellers will tell you, 'no such thing as a free meal.' They obviously haven't heard of debs' parties or embassy receptions. Debs' delights, admittedly, are having a harder time in these days of supposed austerity and embassies have gone mad about security, but the skilled freeloader still has plenty of room for manœuvre. Embassy receptions are the easiest mark because the hosts are reluctant to give offence by challenging gate-crashers. As an American embassy spokesman once said: 'How's the butler to know when someone arrives and says he's the High Commissioner from somewhere . . .?' The right clothes and supercilious bearing are, more often than not, enough to get you to the caviar and champagne but it helps if, in addition, you know at least one embassy official by name and sight. You can wave to him from the door and he will rush over to welcome you — believing, of course, that you have been invited by someone else. The flustered official at the door, impressed by the warmth of your greeting, will diplomatically forget that you arrived without an invitation card. If you are challenged afterwards you could do worse than follow the example of Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who was a prodigious freeloader. Confronted by her non-host at a party in New York, she said: 'I am Mrs. Patrick Campbell, and your flies are undone.' She was deep into his champagne before he had recovered his composure.

If you have neither the stomach nor the inclination for that kind of thing — and I shan't blame you if you haven't — a

polite letter written to your own embassy well in advance of your trip will probably secure you an invitation to whatever function happens to coincide with your visit. It's their job to help you develop export business. But it is certainly true that more elaborate hospitality imposes obligations; in that sense, there is indeed no such thing as a free meal.

Oil money has turned the Arab world into one of the most fashionable destinations for business travellers, and many return with tales of experiences which, to the Western ear, sound bizarre. It is not, for example, unusual for a group of merchant bankers, impeccably dressed in Savile Row suits and trying hard to keep a stiff upper lip, to find themselves squatting around a charcoal pit in which a whole sheep is slowly being roasted. When the sheep is ready the host will tear off choice bits and throw them to his guests: refuse to eat, or pull a face, and he is liable to tear up the cheque you were sent to get.

The word 'Arab', of course, covers different nations with different customs. There is a world of difference between a desert sheik and a sophisticated businessman in, say, Beirut. And one of the richest oil nations, Iran, is not Arab at all. But there is no doubt that Arab cash has become a powerful magnet for businessmen and finance ministers alike: traffic between Western capitals and the Middle East has greatly increased. Eating sheeps' eye-balls, sipping countless cups of too-sweet coffee, and going for days, if not weeks, without anything stronger than orange juice is considered a small price to pay for the chance to 'recycle' some of that petro-money in one's own direction. The scale of the oil producers' earnings is becoming so vast it is hard to grasp. And the sheiks have already stocked up on everything one could possibly want — cars, planes, boats, gold door handles, girls. There are always new trifles, like half-a-dozen Swedish blondes or a midget submarine. But they take care only of the small change. It is not surprising, therefore, that in addition to buying vast quantities of arms (Iran, especially, has become a powerful military force) they have been talked into all kinds of deals which would have been quite unthinkable just a few short years ago. Iran has bought share stakes in Krupp and in Eurodif, a French-led consortium that is building a uranium-enrichment plant in France, while

Kuwait has acquired a large holding in Daimler-Benz and the entire share capital of Britain's St. Martin Property Corporation. Abu Dhabi has become the majority shareholder in London's Park Lane Hotel and a Saudi Arabian individual has bought one million shares in Occidental Oil. They are the forerunners. 'A wave of Arab Jim Slaters, bazaar-trained but with eyes on bigger things, may soon surge across the stricken stock exchanges of America and Europe,' says the *Economist.*

Among Western businessmen waiting to give them a warm welcome is Mr. Spiro Agnew, the former Vice-President of the United States. Agnew resigned in disgrace but has used his former contacts to get deeply involved in property development. He has made several profitable trips to Kuwait and, as a result, reckons to have become a millionaire. One of his Arab-financed projects is a lakeside community in Kentucky; he is said to be looking for land in four other states. With Kuwait already the owner of a whole island, off South Carolina, some Americans fear that Arab money may, in the words of one newspaper, 'change the landscape of the United States'. It is the kind of complaint which Europeans have, in the past, made against the U.S. itself and I dare say the turn-round gives people like Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber quiet satisfaction. In time it may lead to new curbs on investment by foreign nationals, but for the moment Washington seems to welcome the boost such deals can give to the U.S. balance of payments. The same is true of countries like Britain, plagued as they are by persistent financial problems.

The Lebanese have long been the middlemen and for some time now Beirut has rivalled Zurich as an international financial centre — not least because it has successfully copied Swiss features like the numbered bank account. Lebanon is a small country, with an area of no more than 10,400 sq. km., but it's key geographical position at the crossroads to three continents, its role as a transit country, the natural astuteness of its people, and the *laissez-faire* attitude towards banking have given Beirut a well-deserved reputation in the financial world. But it can no longer be taken for granted: new financial centres are developing in the Gulf states themselves and other Arab countries are also trying to snatch some of Lebanon's business. The challenge may do Beirut good. It certainly has worked wonders

for Zurich and the City of London, both of which have tended to take their importance for granted.

Hard times at home make businessmen travel farther and more often in search of new outlets for their talents and products. The search could be curtailed by a growing trend towards protectionism, but most airlines are optimistic about the future of expense account travel — if not about the profits it is likely to produce. Competition for the businessman's favours is keen and still growing, which is how it should be. He subsidises the tourist on his charter flight but in return gets all sorts of things which it is easy to take for granted. He can cancel up to the last minute, or transfer to another airline, without penalty. He can have complete interline arrangements set up for a composite tour or a succession of trips. A plan of complicated meetings in widely different cities can be booked, and then varied at any time. If you are sitting next to a charter passenger he may well have had to pay part of the fare three months in advance, he has to travel on certain dates, he has to stay away for so many weeks, and he cannot change his dates without penalty. For the businessman, high seat-availability on demand means inevitably that there are unfilled seats and this is reflected in the price of tickets.

Experts tell us that, even now, travel is in its infancy. They predict that, a decade from now, day trips from London or Paris to Rio de Janeiro will be commonplace, and that you and I will feel an irresistible urge to explore space. They may be right — though it is perhaps pertinent to mention that experts also said that the *Titanic* was unsinkable, that the tank wouldn't replace the horse, that the aeroplane would never be a weapon of war, that America would win in Vietnam, that thalidomide was harmless, and that Picasso had no future as a painter. Technically, the potential is impressive. And, of course, we already have Concorde. Whatever one may feel about the vast development costs — and there is ample scope for argument — Concorde is a magnificent aircraft. Designed to fly at twice the speed of sound, it will enable airlines to make dramatic cuts in existing flight times on distant air routes. This is not a speculative forecast: it is a matter of established fact. On promotion tours Concorde has flown from Paris to Boston in the remarkable time of three hours, nine minutes. The

London–Tokyo trip took under seven hours, instead of nearly fifteen, and the London–Sydney haul was trimmed from twenty-eight-and-a-half hours to fifteen. Throughout the history of transport there is a clear correlation between increases in vehicle speed and traffic growth. As travel becomes faster, and so more convenient, more people are prepared to undertake journeys. When the jet airliner brought the transatlantic journey within a day's span for the first time, the result was a dramatic surge in traffic over the route. Concorde has had more than its share of problems, and it is undoubtedly a very expensive piece of equipment. It is equally true that its operating costs per seat mile are substantially higher than those of the wide-bodied subsonic jets. Not least, there have been disconcerting wrangles over noise levels, landing rights and other mundane but important issues. The assumption that Concorde may be the key to the airlines' future prosperity could prove wide off the mark. But there is no denying that it represents an impressive advance in the history of passenger transport and that it will give a great deal more flexibility to business travel.

Much as I love speed, safety is for me the most important single factor. High life is fine as long as one can be reasonably sure that it won't be abruptly terminated. Like you, I take comfort in the fact that modern jets cost a vast amount of money — which means, or should mean, that the owners will look after them. I am not an engineer, and therefore not qualified to judge the adequacy of aircraft maintenance. I am, however, qualified to judge statistics and I know that it really *is* safer to fly from an airport than to drive to it. (At some, the biggest hazard is dying of old age while looking for a parking place.) Considering the volume of air traffic around the world it's astonishing that there are so few accidents. Months go by without a single crash and some airlines (and types of aircraft) have operated round-the-clock services for years without losing a single life. It makes airport life insurance policies just about the worst gamble one can think of: you get better odds on a fruit machine. When an accident does happen, of course, it tends to be dramatic and therefore attracts banner headlines. Trouble-free flying is the norm and is taken for granted; crashes are sensational news.

The same, inevitably, goes for hijacking attempts. They can

be a terrifying experience, especially if they happen in mid-air. Hijackers are so obviously capable of anything, including suicide. But despite the tragic and seemingly endless conflict in the Middle East they are comparatively rare. The statistics, I confess, comfort me far more than the security arrangements at major airports because, on the whole, they don't seem a match for a skilful and determined professional. After a recent hijack attempt, the first on British internal services, a reporter from the *Guardian* flew to Manchester and back with two replica guns. The first was concealed in a pewter coffee pot; the second was hidden in his underpants. The security men, clearly bored with their job, gave the coffee pot no more than a casual glance and the body-search came to an abrupt halt when the *Guardian* reporter leered at the officer and said: 'Give us a kiss then, love.' The metal detectors, the cursory examination of luggage, and the frisking are obvious counter-measures and may well stop the mad amateur. But as a traveller I prefer to put my trust in the law of averages which is, happily, on my side.

I am content to leave the moon and Mars to others, and at a pinch I could do without commuting to Rio. But I certainly intend to go on travelling. And I hope that when I do so I shall be able to combine business with pleasure. Some of my colleagues, misled by a joyless press, find this hard to take. Last winter a *Punch* cartoonist called Geoffrey Dickinson and I found ourselves on a splendid beach in the West Indies, doing what is known in our trade as 'research'. (Well, you wouldn't expect a magazine like *Punch* to write about beaches without inspecting them, would you?) We should, I suppose, have spent our time arguing about the trade gap, the miners, the floating pound and the Common Market; instead we found ourselves debating, with ridiculous passion, the respective merits of *crab farci* and *blaff d'oursins*. 'My God,' said Dickinson, 'I feel so *guilty*.' He looked uneasily at the dozen other people on the beach — they seemed to be mostly German exporters talking loudly about the status of the mark. Would they take it as a sign of British complacency if he bared his chest to the seductive sun? A token of decadence if he ordered a planters' punch? I think he wouldn't have been surprised if Denis Healey had emerged from the sea proffering handcuffs, or if a stout British

governess had leaped down from the nearest palm tree and shouted: 'Take your medicine!'

Do other people have the same problem? Does the Japanese tourist, taking his thirty-third picture of Buckingham Palace, feel guilty because he isn't home in Nagoya, producing more Toyotas for the greater glory of Japan? Does that overweight American, in his striped Bermuda shorts and dazzling Caribbean shirt, feel bad because he has taken time off from selling dishwashers to the Canadians? Do those tanned German exporters, with their irritatingly justified pride in the mark, feel wicked because they are not busy adding another nought to their country's trade surplus? I suspect that the answer is no — that Britain, with its permanent economic crisis, its puritanical fondness for cold showers, its masochistic delight in failure, is the only country which indulges in this kind of nonsense.

I have never been able to see anything sinful in leisure myself. And I don't regard travel brochures as subersive literature. If a man chooses to spend his earnings on buying freedom from work, good luck to him. If he prefers sunshine to rain, my compliments. And if travel gives him a better understanding of the world, hallelujah. I wouldn't dream of telling other people how they should spend their money. And I certainly wouldn't dream of denying the business traveller his share of pleasure as well as profit.

It is, for me, a delightful thought that one can look out of one's office window at the grey winter sky in the afternoon and outstare a rhinoceros in an East African game park, or swim in the warm Indian Ocean, the next morning. All you need is a little cash and a good excuse. The excuse you make to yourself may be as important as the one you make to your firm, so let me offer four standard gambits. (1) *You deserve it.* It's been a tough year, you've done your best, you deserve a present. Just because your colleagues don't appreciate all you have achieved — genius, alas, is never recognised until it's too late — there is no reason why you should deprive yourself of the reward that is rightfully yours. (2) *It's an insurance policy.* Everyone needs to relax once in a while, right? And you owe it to your family to take care of your health. Do you realise what it would cost if you had to go into hospital? More, much more,

that a safari. (3) *It's only money anyway.* With inflation eroding the value of your savings almost daily it makes sense to spend now and let tomorrow look after itself. Well, doesn't it? (4) *You need thinking time.* See page 188. Convincing your employer, or boardroom colleagues, may be just a shade more difficult but the problem is successfully tackled by thousands of busy executives every year and merely requires a bit of nerve and imagination. (The Japanese, as always, have a phrase for it. 'One Look,' they say, 'is worth a hundred reports.') And if you come back refreshed, full of bright ideas and/or a lucrative deal, they will praise your style and try to do the same. *Should,* anyway.

See you in New York, Paris, Nairobi, Delhi, San Francisco, Hongkong, Sydney, Venice, Istanbul, Athens or Bonn.

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